R. W. Dyson

St Augustine of Hippo

continuum

CONTINUUM STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY

St Augustine of Hippo

The Christian Transformation of Political Philosophy

This page intentionally left blank

St Augustine of Hippo

The Christian Transformation of Political Philosophy

Robert Dyson

continuum

Continuum International Publishing Group

The Tower Building
11 York Road
London
SE1 7NX

80 Maiden Lane
Suite 704
New York
NY 10038

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 0-8264-8588-X

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd, King's Lynn, Norfolk

In memory of

Wolfgang Marius von Leyden
(1911–2004)

Das Erste und Letzte was vom Genie
gefordert wird, ist Wahrheitsliebe

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

This page intentionally left blank

PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to offer, without hagiography, as complete an account as possible of St Augustine's social and political ideas; to do so with close reference to the primary sources; and to say nothing that is not supported by those sources.

My greatest debt is to the teachers who introduced me as an undergraduate to the literature of Patristic and medieval thought, and who so often guided me subsequently: Gerald Bonner, Professor H.S. Offler and Henry Tudor. Another friend and teacher, Wolfgang von Leyden, died while this book was being written. I am grateful to Iris, James and Lucie von Leyden for permission to dedicate it to his memory. I am indebted also to my colleagues at the University of Durham for their help and encouragement, and to the many students from whose conversation I have benefited. I thank also the editorial staff at Continuum, and especially Philip de Bary, for their technical advice and support.

Mentitur qui te totum legisse fatetur, aut quis cuncta tua lector habere potest? St Isidore of Seville caused these words to be inscribed over the bookcase in the library at Seville containing Augustine's works. He lies who claims to have read all of them; who can possibly have done so? I certainly make no claim to have done so. Also, I have had to leave out a good deal from a work that was required to remain within a strict word limit. I have struck as judicious a balance as I could; but I am conscious of having dealt lightly with Augustine's relation to the other Latin Fathers, and rather one-sidedly with his influence on medieval political conceptions. Such sins of omission are unavoidable; but responsibility for them is, of course, entirely mine.

The language used in the following chapters is for the most part gender-specific. By way of explanation and apology, if apology is needed, I point out that this is so simply because Augustine himself normally uses such language. In undertaking the study of ancient authors, the historian must follow the rule of Cicero: *Nil falsi audeat, nil veri non audeat dicere*. The fact that such authors almost always write from a masculine standpoint is not one that their translators are entitled to wish away.

R.W. Dyson
Durham
Michaelmas Term, 2005

INTRODUCTION

St Augustine has left us a good deal of information about himself, especially in his *Confessions* of 397–400. We cannot understand him fully without paying some attention to that information. He was born at Thagaste (modern Souk Ahras) in the north-east highlands of Numidia in 354. His mother, Monica, was a Christian. It is obvious that Augustine loved and admired her enormously, and was in later life grieved to recall the pain that his youthful waywardness gave her. The portrait that he gives of Monica in the *Confessions* is of a gentle soul with a scrupulous conscience, worried endlessly about her son's spiritual welfare.[1] Her advice was not always good,[2] but Augustine seems genuinely to have believed that God spoke to him through her.[3] He is less fond of his father, Patricius, a pagan (though he became a Christian at the end of his life). On Augustine's account, Patricius was a brusque and insensitive individual and an unfaithful husband, who scolded his wife for her piety and charity. He was a minor civil servant with bourgeois ambitions. His dearest wish for his son was a prosperous career and an advantageous marriage. Augustine is shocked to remember how Patricius crowed with delight at seeing his adolescent son with an erection at the public baths. Patricius scrimped and saved for his son's education, and everybody thought highly of him for it. Augustine is not ungrateful; retrospectively, he has an ambivalent kind of affection for his father. But, he complains, Patricius took no interest in his son's spiritual development.[4]

In what was evidently a rather tense family, Augustine received confusing signals, and his adolescent years were years of indecision

and experiment. As a young man, he found his mind divided between two desires: worldly gratification and spiritual peace – a dichotomy that undoubtedly has a bearing on his subsequent thought. His writings leave us with an impression of a temperament that is anxious, censorious and suspicious of pleasure. After preparatory studies at Thagaste and Madaura, his father sent him to Carthage to complete his professional education in rhetoric. Augustine complains that his morals went to the dogs during the year of idleness that he spent at home while Patricius raised the necessary funds.[5] Augustine arrived in Carthage in 370, and took to life in the wicked city with guilty enthusiasm. *Veni Carthaginem*, he says, *et circumstrepebat me undique sartago flagitiosorum amorum.* 'I came to Carthage, and all around me there clamoured a host of disgraceful loves.'[6] Disgraceful loves were his weakness. By 372 he had a mistress and a son, called Adeodatus.

In 373 occurred an event that Augustine was to celebrate as one of the turning-points of his life. He came across a work of Cicero's (now lost) called *Hortensius*, and reading it awakened in him a sudden and intense love of philosophy. As in a moment of enlightenment, he saw that the beginning of knowledge is the desire to know. 'This book transformed my affections ... Suddenly every vain hope became worthless to me, and I longed with unbelievable warmth of heart for the immortality of wisdom.'[7] He discovered Neoplatonism, the influence of which was to be of central importance to him for the rest of his life.[8] Yearning for spiritual certainty, but inclined to think the Christian scriptures unsophisticated, he devoted nine years to the study of Manichaeism.[9] When he came to see difficulties in it, his friends told him to wait until the distinguished teacher Faustus should come from Rome. When the great man arrived, Augustine found him amiable but uninspiring, and unable to answer his questions. He duly abandoned Manichaeism.[10]

Having for some years taught rhetoric at Thagaste and Carthage, Augustine went in 384 to Milan to take up a position there. He was befriended by prominent members of the Christian community:

Simplicianus, Pontitianus, and especially the bishop, St Ambrose. These were individuals whom Augustine found intellectually and spiritually impressive. Here, at last, was the real thing. After a long mental struggle, he was baptized by St Ambrose on Holy Saturday, 387. The profession of rhetoric became meaningless to him, and a chest complaint that made speaking difficult provided an excuse to give it up.[11] He retired for a period of study and contemplation to Cassiciacum, where he lived in seclusion with a group of like-minded friends. Here, he wrote his first works as a Christian:[12] *Contra academicos*, *De beata vita* and *De ordine*. He was ordained priest in 391, apparently against his own inclination.[13] In 396 he became Bishop of Hippo (the modern Algerian town of Annaba), where he remained for more than thirty years. He died in 430, on 28 August: the day on which his feast is celebrated. He managed to combine an active public life with an amazing literary output. Excluding all works of doubtful authenticity, his writings add up to over a hundred books and treatises, more than two hundred letters (some of them short treatises in themselves) and over five hundred sermons.[14]

This brief biography sketches the life of the most significant intellectual figure of the Christian West down to the time of St Thomas.[15] It is hardly possible to exaggerate Augustine's influence on the development and character of European thought. The theology of the West, it has been said, 'is largely a series of annotations to his work.'[16] This importance is due partly to Augustine's own gift for criticism, exposition and synthesis, and – perhaps above all – to his flair as a rhetorician. Augustine appeals uniquely to both reason and emotion. It is due also to historical accident. In a perceptive sketch of Augustine, G.G. Coulton remarks that, in the century after the death of the emperor Constantine, 'the Church absorbed nearly all that share of ancient thought of which she remained in possession throughout the Middle Ages.' During it, she 'borrowed rapidly and deeply from the philosophy, the literature, the discipline, and the art' of the Roman Empire. 'St Augustine's life fills most of this great

time.' Considered in terms of his place in intellectual history, Augustine 'closes ancient thought and begins medieval thought.'[17] If this is not quite true – and such general utterances are never immune to qualification – it is for our purposes as true as makes no difference.

We are to confine ourselves to a specific field: Augustine's importance as a contributor to the history of political thought. Why is he of interest in this regard? Three answers can be given. First: he engages more fully than any earlier Christian author with the political beliefs and ethical presuppositions of classical antiquity. His literary career provides us with a point at which to identify the beginnings of the political thought of Western Christianity. Second: he constructs a comprehensive critique of the moral and political tradition of imperial Rome. Broadly stated, the purpose of his enormous *De civitate Dei* is to correct Rome's long-cherished evaluation of herself as the Eternal City whose law, justice and peace are the leaven of civilization. In this way, Augustine is no small contributor to the conceptual processes by which the empire of the Caesars became the *res publica Christiana* of the Middle Ages. Third: his ideas are among the most significant influences bearing upon the development of medieval political thought. The precise extent of this influence has been much debated, but it is in general terms indubitable. The two 'Cities' (often misrepresented by later authors, but their misrepresentation is important in itself); the association of political power with everything in human behaviour that is selfish and deplorable; the insistence on mankind's entire dependence upon Divine grace made accessible through the Church; the suggestion that the Church may call upon secular rulers to apply their power to her purposes: these Augustinian motifs were to be woven tightly into political debate in the period between the fifth and the fourteenth centuries. We shall give some attention to this rather intricate subject in Chapter 5.

These, then, are the themes with which we shall deal in the following pages. Before we begin, however, we must notice a difficulty

to which we shall several times recur. First and last, the concerns expressed in Augustine's works are theological, pastoral and devotional. In none of them does he offer a connected 'political philosophy.' In the years immediately following his conversion, Augustine was clear as to his chosen intellectual agenda. *Deum et animam scire cupio*, he says in his *Soliloquiae* of 386–387. *Nihilne plus? Nihil omnino.* 'I desire to know God and the soul. Nothing else? Nothing at all.'[18] Becoming a bishop and an active controversialist put paid to the contemplative life that he had hoped for; but, for all their diversity, the writings of Augustine are fundamentally religious writings. The components of his social, political and historical thought are distributed throughout a range of sources none of which is primarily 'political' in character. The task of bringing them together into a coherent exposition is a complex one, and one from which conjecture cannot be entirely absent. Such an exposition will in the nature of the case impose on Augustine's political thought an appearance of unity that it lacks in reality. The reader therefore should bear in mind that the account presented in this volume is to an extent artificial, and perhaps less attentive to context than one would like.

Having said this, the fact remains that those aspects of Augustine's thought with which we are concerned display a high degree of consistency throughout his career, save in a few respects that we shall mention as we come to them. Our account is artificial, but it is not in any substantial way misleading. In any case, it is as true in this instance as it is generally that the purpose of a commentary is not to replace the primary sources, but to encourage readers to study them for themselves.

Notes

1. *Confessions* 3:11–12; 9:8–13.
2. *Confessions* 6:13–15.
3. *Confessions* 9:10.
4. *Confessions* 2:3.

5. Ibid.
6. *Confessions* 3:1.
7. *Confessions* 3:4.
8. See J. O'Meara, 'Neo-Platonism in the Conversion of St Augustine,' *Dominican Studies* 3 (1950); *The Young Augustine: The Growth of St Augustine's Mind up to his Conversion* (London: Longmans, 1954); 'Augustine and Neoplatonism,' *Recherches augustiniennes* 1 (1958); J. M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); R. Teske, 'Saint Augustine as a Philosopher: the Birth of Christian Metaphysics,' *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992). See also V. J. Bourke, *Augustine's Love of Wisdom: An Introspective Philosophy*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1992); T.K. Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).
9. See, e.g,, M. Tardieu, *Le Manicheisme* (Paris; PUF, 1981); also K.L.E. Lee, *Augustine, Manichaeism, and the Good* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); J. van Oort, G. Wurst and O. Wermelinger (eds), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
10. *Confessions* 5:3–7.
11. *Confessions* 9:2.
12. Before his conversion he had written a prose work called *De pulchro et apto*, and a prize poem that has not survived.
13. See *Sermo* 355:2.
14. Chronological and bibliographical details of Augustine's works are presented in a helpful tabular form in P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967).
15. For detailed modern biographies of Augustine see G. Bonner, *St Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1986); P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a Biography*; C. Kirwan, *Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1989). See also E. Portalié, SJ, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine* (trans. R.J. Bastian, SJ; London: Burns & Oates, 1960). Despite its author's disavowal of hagiography, this last source should be approached with caution. For shorter treatments see H. Chadwick, *Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); M.T. Clark, *Augustine* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1994).
16. E. TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), p. 19. Fr Portalié even says: 'His authority as a Christian writer is second only to the

canonical writings and the official pronouncements of the Church' (*A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine*, p. xxxvi).

17. G.G. Coulton, 'Augustine,' in *Studies in Medieval Thought* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1940), p. 24.
18. *Soliloquiae* 1:6.

CHAPTER 1

SIN, FREE WILL AND GRACE: THE TWO CITIES

From the beginning, Christianity was an evangelizing faith. The disciples were enjoined to 'Go … into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'[1] But preaching the gospel was no easy task. The earliest Christians had to contend from the first with the indifference, hostility and misconceptions of the pagan world. From 65 to the early fourth century they suffered recurrent, and sometimes intense, persecution. In the gradual process of establishing herself as an intellectual and moral presence within the Roman Empire, the Church encountered two main challenges: the conversion of unbelievers, and the task of defending and justifying herself in the face of opposition.

To a large extent, her instinct was to rise to these challenges by presenting the pagan world with the practical example of the Christian life. Inevitably, however, her response was conditioned also by the intellectual milieu in which she found herself. It was a milieu in which were represented several flourishing traditions of thought. Of these, the most prominent were the 'Neoplatonist' elaboration of Plato's philosophy developed in the third century by Plotinus, and Stoicism, especially in the form carried from the Greek into the Roman world by Panaetius and Posidonius in the second century BCE.[2] Behind these traditions stood the great figures of Plato himself and Aristotle, who had shaped so authoritatively the character of classical thought. It is true that in the era of the persecutions some Christians were disposed to reject the pursuit of philosophy altogether: to consider that the gospel had removed the need for any

further kind of enquiry. But it is easy to exaggerate the anti-intellectualism of the early Church. The appeal of Christianity was often to simple folk; but Christ's injunction was that the gospel should be preached not to the unsophisticated only, but to *every* creature. For the most part, Christian apologists responded positively to the task of presenting their beliefs in ways amenable to an educated pagan audience.[3]

The early Church's interaction with secular philosophy is not something that we can or need here consider in a general way. We mention it because it is important to emphasize from the start that Augustine's social and political thought is not *sui generis*. It did not develop in a vacuum; it is what one might call a revisionist response to established conceptions of the nature of social and political experience. Above all, it is an attempt to come to terms with the major obstacle that Christianity encountered in trying to find accommodations with secular moral sensibility. We shall in this chapter describe Augustine's understanding of this obstacle, and in subsequent chapters we shall elucidate the influence of that understanding on his contribution to the Christian tradition of social and political theory.

(a) Christianity, Secular Ethics and the Idea of a Law of Nature

The earliest Christian philosophers found in Neoplatonism and Stoicism intellectual systems that were not entirely alien to their own. The Stoic idea of a primordial Golden Age of justice and harmony eventually vitiated by greed and tyranny resonated with Christians familiar with the stories of Eden and the Fall.[4] The conception of another world, higher and purer than 'ours'; of the universe as a moral order ruled by Divine providence; of the cosmopolitan brotherhood of mankind; of the ethical non-relevance of conventional social distinctions: these Platonist and Stoic themes were ones with which Christian authors found it easy to feel at home. They were inclined to think that God has allowed glimpses of His wisdom to enter the minds even of those denied the fullness of

Divine revelation. Before the fourth century, the Fathers of the Church were not much interested in political questions as such. Their eschatological cast of mind did not permit more than an incidental concern with the things of this world. But they were struck by one idea in particular: the classical conception of an unwritten moral law – a 'natural' law available to human reason – lying behind and informing all positive or conventional law.[5] Quite apart from its distinguished pedigree in Plato, Aristotle and Greek and Roman Stoicism, the conception of a natural and universal moral order had entered the Christian scriptures by way of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans:

> With God, there is no respect of persons [no favouritism]. As many as have sinned outside the Law [of Moses] shall also perish outside the Law; and as many as have sinned within the Law shall be judged within the Law. For it is not those who hear the Law who are justified before God, but those who act on it. And when the gentiles, who do not have the Law, nonetheless do by nature the things that the Law enjoins, then, not having the Law, they are a law in themselves. They show that the requirements of the Law are written into their hearts, and that their conscience and thoughts testify to them, accusing them and exonerating them accordingly.[6]

That St Paul was at least superficially familiar with modes of thought lying outside the Jewish tradition is evident from his sermon to the Athenian people recorded at Acts 17:22–31.[7] This sermon, with its allusion to Stoic 'poets,' is an illustration of the readiness of Christian intellectuals to look for ways of addressing gentile audiences in terms intelligible to them. It is hardly possible to doubt that Romans 2:11–15 is also Stoic in inspiration.[8] With this passage as the chief starting point, the idea of a natural law written into the hearts of men was developed through the writings of the Fathers into an early component of the Church's moral philosophy. The Christians, says Origen (185–254), try to live according to the law of nature because they have come to understand that the law of nature and the law of God are the same.[9] Tertullian (ca 160–225) asserts

that it is through nature that God first teaches us the truth: what nature teaches is what God teaches; nature is the master, the soul is the pupil.[10] Lactantius (ca 240–320), discussing the Stoic principle of 'life according to nature,' remarks initially that the principle is too vague to be useful, but agrees at last that man is born for virtue and that it is good for him to follow his own nature.[11] 'Let us imitate nature,' says Augustine's mentor St Ambrose (ca 340–397). 'Conformity with nature provides us with a pattern of discipline and a standard of right conduct.'[12]

More or less consistent accounts of what this standard of right conduct is are given by Minucius Felix (fl. ca 160), Lactantius, St Ambrose, St Hilary of Poitiers (315–367), St Jerome (347–419), Ambrosiaster (ca 350). These influential figures offer, via St Paul, a Christian reworking of a long-established idea. The law of nature is the same everywhere; it is inscribed by God into the hearts of men; it instructs us to do good and avoid evil; it enjoins us not to injure one another, not to steal, not to commit fraud, not to bear false witness, not to have designs on another man's wife. All men are equal by nature; the world is the common property of mankind; the institutions of government and private property have come into being by convention only, because of human sinfulness and greed.[13] Holy Scripture teaches these things too, but the Scriptures were given to men not to replace, but to codify and make explicit a pre-existing law of nature. St Ambrose says:

> Law is twofold: natural and written. The natural law is in the heart and the written law on tables. First of all, nature herself teaches us to do what is good; afterwards came that Law which was given though Moses.[14]

It is clear from these examples that, by the fourth century, the Church had appropriated to herself a large part of the language of pagan ethics.

Everything that we find elsewhere in Patristic writing about the law of nature is synthesised and expanded by Augustine and made

part of his moral teaching. But what is especially important to us is the way in which Augustine modifies the classical natural law doctrine in the light of the view of human nature that the Christian faith appears to require. This view of human nature is what we have referred to as the major obstacle that Christianity encountered in coming to terms with pagan theories of moral action. Augustine is the first Christian author to confront this obstacle with a view to specifying in detail its implications for social and political life and relationships. It is this fact above all that gives his political thought its character.

Augustine's understanding of the law of nature is a synopsis of Stoicism, Platonism and elements suggested by the Christian Scriptures and his Patristic forebears. He has little Greek; he failed to acquire it despite the 'cruel threats and punishments' of his schoolmasters (fortunately, he thinks: Greek literature is full of disgraceful stories anyway).[15] He owes his knowledge of Greek authors to Latin summaries and translations; but he is probably the most learned in philosophy of all the Western Fathers. Philosophically, his preference is for Platonism;[16] the Platonists, he says, are the only pagan philosophers worth taking seriously.[17] In practice, however, he is not at all unsympathetic to Stoicism and the Patristic revisions of it that he knew. To his mind, the philosophical traditions to which he had access confirm the biblical truth that certain eternal precepts of moral wisdom are intrinsic to the nature of things and intelligible to us. The world is the product of a Creator Who 'saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.'[18] God has designed the order of nature to be a model for our emulation. Human institutions are provisional, but right thought is imperishable; wisdom is the same for all men everywhere and accessible to the human mind, albeit imperfectly. Even the wicked know what good is, and can grieve for the loss of it.

Augustine characteristically refers to the immutable truths of morality by way of an analogy with light: the light that God allows to shine on the minds of intelligent creatures even if they do not be-

lieve in Him.[19] This may be meant as an echo of Plato,[20] though no doubt it is also a relic of Augustine's dalliance with Manichaeism. Such truths are *lumina virtutum*: lights that shed moral illumination upon the mind in the way that theoretical reflection sheds scientific illumination. These lights comprise the law of nature, and our immediate or instinctive awareness of this law is called *conscientia*.[21] Augustine repeats a suggestion of St Ambrose, Ambrosiaster and St Jerome: that God has inscribed the law of nature into our hearts, but the Law of Moses and of the Gospel were given also because mankind was not able to obey the law of nature without the inducement of a written law.[22]

Augustine holds that, expressed at its most general, the law of nature contains a single precept, in which all lower-order principles of right conduct are contained: that we should behave towards others as we should wish them to behave towards us. If men were able to act on this principle consistently, the world would be a place of peace and co-operation. His most detailed statement along these lines appears in the long and varied commentary on the Psalms that he produced between about 392 and 418.

> To all men, as it were to an audience consisting of the whole human race, the Truth cries: 'If truly indeed you speak justice, judge right things, you sons of men.'[23] For is it not an easy thing to speak of justice even to the unjust man? What man, if asked about justice when his own interests are not at stake, would not easily be able to tell you what is just? This is because the hand of our Maker has written the truth into our very hearts: 'That which you do not wish to have done to yourself, do not do to another.'[24] Even before the Law [of Moses] was given no one was permitted to be ignorant of this truth, so that there might be some standard by which even those to whom the Law was not given could be judged. But lest men should complain that something was lacking to them, that which they did not read in their heart has been written on tablets. For it was not that they did not have it written, but that they would not read it ... There has been placed before their eyes that which they would [in any case] be compelled to see in their conscience ... Who has taught you that you do not want other men to make advances to your wife? Who has taught you that you

> do not want to have someone rob you? Who has taught you that you do not want to suffer injustice? ... Come, if you do not want to suffer these things yourself, are you the only man? Do you not live in the society of the human race? He who is made together with you is your companion; and all men have been made in the image of God,[25] even though they wear away what He has formed by their earthly desires ... For you declare that there is evil in that which you do not wish to suffer; and this is something that you are constrained to know by an inward law written into your own heart.[26]

In Chapter 3, we shall see something of how Augustine applies a Christianized version of the law of nature to the institutions of private property and slavery. His remarks in these and other contexts clearly reflect familiar natural law doctrines, present in the literature of pagan ethics and borne out by Scripture and the writings of the earlier Fathers.

But the process of accommodating such doctrines to a Christian social theory runs up against an obvious difficulty. We are taught that God 'saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.' Evidently, His intention was that human activity within, and as part of, the order of creation should be righteous activity. But experience shows that human conduct is on the whole anything but righteous. Why is this so? Why is there this disparity between God's creative intention and the actual behaviour of those whom He has created? Classical authors had, of course, known that people are capable of behaving badly; but they had accounted for bad behaviour in ways, and prescribed remedies for it of a kind, that cannot commend themselves to the Christian. It is here that our major obstacle, the fundamental difference between pagan and Christian psychology or anthropology, makes its presence felt.

This difference arises out of divergent understandings of the relation between reason and will. Plato, Aristotle, and the Greek and Roman Stoics had taken it as axiomatic that human beings have the capacity both to identify and accomplish the ethical ends appropriate to rational creatures.[27] They had supposed that we are endowed

by nature with two things: a faculty of reason, by which we can perceive and interpret the moral prescriptions of nature; and a will that enables us to translate those prescriptions into practice. These moral capabilities can be deficient in individuals or possessed by them in varying degrees; they need to be developed through education and socialization: but they are present in human nature intrinsically. Strife and injustice arise not because men are wicked, but because they are immature or misguided. They are, however, morally educable. Under suitable conditions, they can be directed in ways that are individually and socially beneficial, and the task of political philosophy is to identify what those conditions are and prescribe them. By appropriate moral training and action in a community of their fellow human beings, men can achieve what Aristotle called εὐδαιμονία (*eudaimonia*): a condition of lifelong happiness and well-being accomplished through the social use of the faculty of reason. For the Stoics, 'right reason' shows us that the entire human race is one family, united in a moral kinship that transcends all conventional division and difference.

Augustine has no quarrel with the proposition that reason is a moral faculty, capable of apprehending universal truths. He realizes, however, that the Christian cannot subscribe to the idea that the will of man is, or can by any human contrivance be made, a righteous will. If *eudaimonia* is a kind of redemption, its attainment cannot lie in our own hands. Classical analysts of human behaviour and motivation had lacked the knowledge that Divine revelation gives us. Systematically, they had made the mistake of supposing that human beings are perfectible through human effort. We, on the other hand, know from the testimony of Scripture that human nature is *fallen* nature. We are sinners. Our wills are defective: they are not, as Augustine habitually expresses it, rightly ordered. Men have a persistent tendency to unrighteousness that they cannot correct by anything residing within themselves, and for the most part do not wish to correct. What is to be made of this difficulty and its impact on any attempt to integrate Christianity and classical moral thought?

(b) Augustine's Moral Epistemology: Four Foundations

Augustine's beliefs as to the moral defectiveness of the human will and the individual and social consequences of this defectiveness are reflected in his writings consistently. Broadly speaking, these beliefs rest upon four foundations. It will be convenient to consider each of these foundations separately, though it should be borne in mind that the separation is artificial; nor is there much point in trying to assign precise degrees of significance to each of them.

The first foundation that we mention is Augustine's own personality as he discloses it in the *Confessions*. As we said in the Introduction, Augustine's biography has a good deal to contribute to our understanding of his thought. It would not take much ingenuity to psychoanalyze him in terms of his relationship with his beloved mother and the father towards whom he expresses such mixed feelings.[28] It is evident that the experiences of his youth, culminating in his conversion in 387, created in him deep feelings of division, anxiety and guilt. The *Confessions* contain a retrospect of the abandoned life that he believes himself to have led in his early years.[29] He is notably fearful of sex and fascinated by it, and especially remorseful about his own youthful escapades with women. *Domine, da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo*;[30] 'O Lord, give me chastity and restraint, but not yet.' This, Augustine tells us, was his prayer as a young man, 'utterly wretched even at the beginning of my youth.' One wonders if he ever actually said this, but he certainly thinks he did; simultaneously worried, he adds, that God might answer his prayer too soon. Looked at objectively, Augustine's sensitivity to his own failings seems neurotic. He is convinced of his own depravity to the point of self-indulgence. Sexual misbehaviour aside, he is pained by the recollection of the most trivial things. He thinks himself sinful for having cried in his cradle; for having liked to play ball as a child;[31] seven famous chapters of the *Confessions* are devoted to raking over his motives when, as a boy of sixteen, he and a gang of friends pillaged a neighbour's pear tree.[32] What troubles

Augustine most is the fact that the theft was pointless. He was not hungry; he had better pears at home; he and the other lads only fed the pilfered pears to the pigs. 'I stole them,' he laments, 'simply for the sake of stealing them; when I had stolen them, I threw them away. My only delight in them was my own sin.'[33]

Painful introspection about his own misdeeds led Augustine to larger issues. At an early stage in his development as a Christian, and for psychological reasons that it would not be hard to identify, Augustine's personal sense of sin and unworthiness transformed itself into a diagnosis of the predicament of mankind as a whole. His thinking on social and political matters depends almost entirely upon his conviction as to the inveterate sinfulness, not of this person or that, but of the entire human race. Having regard to what it tells us about human behaviour, the episode of the pears is, for him, the paradigm of sin. Human beings persistently sin pointlessly. They do wrong for its own sake; they are fatally attracted to the means of their own destruction. Even babies in their mothers' arms are full of self-centred demands; they are harmless only because they do not have the strength to do harm. 'The innocence of the infant lies in the weakness of his body, not in the infant mind.'[34] The mature Augustine is convinced of the moral destitution of even ordinary men and women and of each individual's inability to repress his or her own wicked impulses. Adults differ from demanding babies only inasmuch as they have developed a strength commensurate with their demands.

The second of our four foundations, related closely to the first, is Augustine's detailed exegesis of the biblical story of the Fall. No doubt his interpretation of Scripture is in some degree a rationalization of his feelings about himself; but this is a consideration about which we need not speculate any further. Insofar as it has a theoretical basis as distinct from a personal or psychological one – granted that the distinction cannot be precisely drawn – Augustine's beliefs about the moral plight of mankind are grounded in his understanding, mediated especially through St Paul's Epistle to the

Romans, of the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve. It is important to understand that, for Augustine, the Scriptural account of the Fall is not myth, but history. It is a factual chronicle of the origin of all our woe.[35]

When God created Adam, He established him in the Garden of Eden and appointed the rest of the natural order to serve him. Seeing that it is not good for man to be alone, He made Eve to be Adam's helper and companion.[36] The life of Adam and Eve in the Garden should have been a carefree idyll, joyous and self-sufficient. All their wants would have been supplied without toil. They would have been able to produce offspring without the pain of childbirth or the shame of lust. This last point is one upon which Augustine dwells at length: to sinless humans, sexual desire would be unnecessary, and they would have been spared all the trouble that it causes. They would have been exempt also from sickness and old age. At last, they would have passed over from earth to heaven without suffering death and been united with God in eternal happiness.[37]

Initially, all was well. 'The love of the pair for God and for one another was undisturbed, and they lived in a faithful and sincere fellowship that brought them great gladness, for what they loved was always present for them to enjoy. There was a tranquil avoidance of sin; and, for as long as this continued, no evil of any kind intruded.'[38] But it was possible for them to fall from this blessed state into a condition of spiritual death. Adam and Eve were made sinless, but they had the capacity to sin: latent as yet, but present nonetheless. One restriction only was imposed on them. 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.'[39] With this single exception, their life was one of perfect freedom; but this exception proved to be their undoing. Eve, tempted by the serpent, tempted Adam in turn; he sinned also, and so mankind fell from grace.

The story of the Fall reveals to us clearly the barrier that stands between Christian moral theory and the rationalism and humanism

of classical ethics: the denaturing of mankind by sin. Augustine is well aware of the difficulties that the doctrine of the Fall presents when it is considered in relation to the conceptions of secular moral philosophy, and he is at pains to address them. We shall say something in a general way about his attempt to do so shortly. For the time being, let us examine one question in particular. If the first human beings were the good creation of a good God, why did they fall? Why did they not remain good forever? This question is an aspect of the philosophical problem of evil: a problem that occupied Augustine considerably during his early years. He was, he tells us, attracted to Manichaeism as a young man because its dualism seemed to offer a way out of the obvious philosophical difficulties of Christianity.[40] On the face of it, as he points out, the existence of evil appears to show that God, inasmuch as He either permits it or cannot abolish it, is either not good or not almighty.[41] The solution to this problem at which Augustine eventually arrived is rooted in his Neoplatonist background. The 'existence' of evil ceases to be a problem, he suggests, as soon as we grasp that, correctly understood, evil *has* no existence; more strictly, that it has no positive existence. What we call evil in any particular case is only a relative lack or privation of good. Evil is moreover always relative to some pre-existing good. For anything to be evil, it must first exist, and insofar as it exists, it is the work of God, and to that extent good.

> Everything that exists is either corporeal or incorporeal. The corporeal is embraced by sensible form, and the incorporeal by intelligible. Everything that exists, then, is not without some form. But where there is some form there is necessarily some mode of existence; and a mode of existence is a kind of good. Absolute evil therefore has no mode of existence, for it lacks all good. It therefore does not exist, for it is embraced by no form, and the whole meaning of evil is derived from the privation of form.[42]

The only absolute evil is nothingness or non-existence: the complete non-existence of good. 'There exists a Nature in which there is no evil and in which evil cannot exist at all, but there cannot exist a

nature in which there is no good.'[43] For Augustine, nature is not evil; rather, it is necessarily or intrinsically imperfect.

> Because ... the Creator of all natures is supremely good, all natures are themselves good. But because they are not, like their Creator, supremely and immutably good, their good may be diminished and increased.[44]

As created beings, Adam and Eve were good; but neither they nor any other creature could exemplify that perfection of nature which belongs to God alone. Anything that does not have God's perfection of being is to that extent separate from Him, and this separation, inasmuch as it exists at all, is capable of becoming wider. To Augustine's mind, created things, because they are imperfect, have as it were a gravitational tendency to fall away from God. This way of putting it is very characteristic of him.[45] The inclination of the natural order is to deteriorate; every creature tends, under the weight of its own imperfection, to descend towards nothingness or negation. But God does not allow even His fallen creation to pass out of existence altogether; He does not, that is, allow it to become entirely evil. In His mercy He keeps the fallen angels and men in being, making use of them, as is His way, to bring forth good out of evil.[46]

Why did the Fall occur? It occurred because the will with which Adam and Eve were created was a free will. This is what distinguishes mankind from the rest of creation. Adam and Eve were made with a will not bound to fall away from God, but capable of doing so. Why did God create man with free will, and hence with the potential to harm himself? He did so because free will was an essential component of man's nature as a moral being, fashioned to love God and to take delight in doing His will. It was essential because, had Adam and Eve been made without it, they would have been unable to choose to act well, and therefore unable to achieve the purposes for which God intended them.[47] A will that is not free is neither good nor bad; but 'God, as it is written,[48] made man up-

right, and consequently with a good will; for if he had not had a good will, he could not have been upright.'[49]

A good will, then, is necessarily a free will, and because the first humans were free the possibility of choosing *not* to sin was open to them. In sinning, both were equally culpable – God paid no attention to Adam's miserable attempt to shift the blame to his wife – and both sinned by their own free choice. Their sin lay not in the mere eating of a piece of fruit. It lay behind the act itself, in their intentional disobedience of the Divine will. The cause of this disobedience, the inward factor that governed their choice, was the self-esteem that is an inevitable part of the character of anyone who has the freedom to choose between self and other. Augustine calls this self-esteem by various names – pride, self-love, exaltation – but, whatever name is attached to it, the conclusion is the same: 'You cannot attribute the cause of any human fault to God; for the cause of all human offences is pride.'[50] Eating the forbidden fruit made Adam and Eve aware of their own 'nakedness': their own inferiority. They wanted to be more than they were; they wished to become like gods themselves. Impelled by this proud desire, they allowed love of God to be driven out of their hearts by love of self. Their sin was all the greater, and all the more worthy of punishment, because abstaining from it would have been so easy. So little was asked of Adam and Eve, yet still they put their own wants before their duty to God. As a punishment, they were driven out of the Garden.

> And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.[51]

Adam and Eve thus became subject to all the afflictions of this life, and, after this life, to damnation in the material fires of hell, where it is their lot to suffer alongside the fallen angels with whom they share the punishment of rebellion.[52]

But the consequences of the Original Sin go far beyond those incurred by the first man and woman. It is here that the bridge between the Original Sin and the social and political implications of that sin begins to appear. There are two such consequences in particular. First, Augustine insists that all the offspring of Adam and Eve – even new-born infants[53] – share or participate in their guilt. All the descendants of the first two human beings come into the world bearing the guilt of the Original Sin. They are therefore just as deserving of damnation as Adam and Eve were. The sinful condition of humanity is, literally, radical. 'The whole mass of the human race is condemned; for he who at first gave entrance to sin has been punished with all his posterity who were in him as in a root.'[54] Augustine seems to think that sin has somehow tainted the physical substance of which we are made. As St Paul had expressed it, we are all vessels made from the same lump.[55] The impurities introduced into that lump at the beginning are therefore now present in us all. 'Nothing else could be born of [Adam and Eve] than that which they themselves had been.'[56]

Second, and more importantly, Augustine holds that the Original Sin has made man incapable of *willing* rightly. Adam and Eve, by making unrighteous use of the will by which they might have chosen to put God before self, damaged or impaired it in some way, and all their offspring have inherited it from them in this faulty condition. As descendants and heirs, they could succeed only to what their parents had actually possessed. For this reason, Augustine thinks, human beings have become incapable of not sinning: of not being actuated by the self-love that actuated Adam and Eve. Mankind still has free will, but only to do evil. We can choose, but all our choices are directed by love of self rather than by love of God. For this reason, we can choose only in the sense of selecting from among the many possible sins which ones actually to commit.[57] Our sins originate in our damaged intentionality. Everything that we do is sinful not because of what the act is, but because of why we do it: because we are invariably motivated by selfishness rather than by a

desire to do God's will. By our own efforts, we cannot choose non-sin. We are, indeed, caught in an inescapable paradox. The very act of trying to redeem ourselves by abstaining from sin would be a selfish act.[58] Human beings have become as it were Platonically unjust. Their temperaments are dominated by appetite and spirit rather than by the reason that recognizes the sovereignty of God.[59]

It is clear that, considered from the point of view of philosophy, Augustine's interpretation of the Fall and its consequences involves some highly intractable problems. His inferences from the Bible are on the face of it at odds with some of the most straightforward conclusions of moral reasoning, not to mention common sense. This observation brings us to our third foundation: Augustine's conception of the scope and nature of philosophical enquiry and his corresponding reliance upon revelation as establishing what we can know about sin, grace and salvation.

In connection with the Fall, pagan philosophers, and not a few Christians – especially the Pelagians (see pp. 29–31) – were inclined to ask a range of predictable questions. How can anyone bear the guilt of an act committed by his most remote ancestor or, indeed, by anyone at all except himself? How can anyone be born in a state of guilt: how can someone who has not yet performed any act be guilty of anything? Why should it be supposed that a single dereliction, however grievous, permanently damaged Adam and Eve's capacity to will righteously? Granted that all human beings have the same physical origin, why should an alteration that was moral or mental in character have become a universal impairment inherited by every member of the human race? If we cannot choose anything but sin, how is our will free? Augustine is fully aware of these objections. He knows quite well that, in ordinary circumstances, it makes no sense to ascribe either guilt or merit to acts other than those freely willed by those who perform them.[60] But when it comes to the doctrine of Original Sin and its implications, he insists that we must accept the evidence of Scripture without question. This insistence is in keeping with his habitual attitude to Scripture and to knowledge in general.

Holy Scripture contains everything necessary to salvation. If the Scriptures do not provide answers to certain questions, this must be because our salvation does not depend upon our knowing those answers. God has not chosen to reveal the whole of His purpose to us. That which we cannot know we must receive on trust.

For Augustine, in short, reason must yield ultimately to faith. If the conclusions of reason are incompatible with the requirements of faith, so much the worse for reason. In that case, however, is not the very idea of philosophy – the classical conviction that human ratiocination can uncover substantive truths – altogether negated? Does not the Christian faith require us to abandon philosophy as mistaken or presumptuous? Some of Augustine's predecessors in African Christianity had thought so. The great apologist Tertullian, active in the Church at Carthage during the persecution of 202–211 under Septimius Severus, had stated clearly a belief in the intellectual self-sufficiency of Christianity. 'What,' he asks,

> has Jerusalem to do with Athens or the Church with the Academy or the Christian with the unbeliever? Our principles come from the Porch of Solomon,[61] who taught that the Lord is to be sought in simplicity of heart.[62] I have no use, therefore, for a Stoic or Platonist or dialectical Christianity. Since the coming of Christ, we have no need of speculation; since receiving the gospel, we have no need of scholarship.[63]

Such anti-intellectualism is understandable enough as a response of persecuted Christians to an inimical world; but, as we have noted, it was not typical of Patristic Christianity as a whole. Augustine himself believes that philosophical enquiry is a possible and fruitful enterprise. This conviction, acquired from Cicero's *Hortensius* before his conversion, never left him. Faith does not obliterate philosophy or render it pointless; but, Augustine insists, it is necessary correctly to understand the order in which faith and philosophy stand to each other. His account of this standing, briefly described, is as follows. Reasoning can achieve a great deal. It can clarify the truth for us; it can reveal the relations that constitute the wholeness of truth insofar

as that wholeness is accessible to mortal minds. But reasoning necessarily proceeds from first principles that are not themselves established by reason. What we know and how we can know it depends upon the ways in which our beliefs train or dispose our intellect. We cannot know anything, and hence we cannot reason about anything, unless we first have an apprehension of the reality of which our knowledge purports to be knowledge. But a correct apprehension of reality can come about only through an act of belief. Reason itself, because consequent upon such an apprehension, cannot effect it. If our beliefs are true beliefs, the conclusions that reason infers from them will be valid; if not, not. Augustine therefore accords a logical priority to faith over reason. The truths presented to us authoritatively by Holy Scripture are the preconditions of right understanding and the solution to all philosophical difficulties. 'Do not,' he says, in an echo of Tertullian, 'seek to understand in order than you may believe; rather, believe in order that you may understand: for you will not understand unless you believe.'[64]

If we restate it in secular language, there is really nothing eccentric about Augustine's conception of philosophy. His point is that philosophy has to take for granted certain things that it cannot itself establish: in other words, that all inference must rest upon principles that are *a priori*. Given that this is so, it is important to be clear as to what those principles are. If his account of philosophy seems odd and exasperating to the modern reader, this is because, with a disregard for categorial distinctions that we now observe as a matter of course, it is so completely bound up with his religious convictions. He relies upon the authority of Scripture without acknowledging any need to explain why we are to regard Scripture as authoritative. One might add also that Augustine's attitude is to a great extent a matter of temperament. He speaks as one whose youth had been distinguished by a longing for certainty that intellectual enquiry had failed to satisfy. In his experience, the search for answers through such enquiry revealed only further questions. 'These,' he says in the *Confessions*, referring to the astrological doc-

trines of the Manichaeans that he had studied as a young man, 'were the dishes in which, when I was starving for Thee, they served up to me the sun and moon!'[65] It is as characteristic of Augustine as it is of most people to assume that what is true for him is true for everyone: the life of the mind alone cannot bring us rest. He is correspondingly impatient of those philosophers who delude themselves and others by trying to establish through reason what only faith can teach;[66] and he knows that faith enjoins many things that seem contrary to reason. That God is good and that He has created the natural order in the way revealed in the Scriptures: these are the first principles of understanding. But God has chosen to withhold much from us, and we may not question His wisdom or His justice in doing so.

Realizing our own limitations is therefore the beginning of wisdom. Philosophy must presuppose faith; it can elaborate and clarify faith, but it cannot create it. It cannot create it because our minds can work only in ways that are logically and historically determinate. We cannot make sense of everything because no standpoint is available to us from which we can perceive God's eternal plan. Unlike us, God does not exist within time. He is the Creator of time. He dwells outside it in a changeless eternity, from the vantage-point of which His vision takes in the whole of what we call past, present and future in a single comprehensive glance.[67] He cannot forget anything past, nor be taken unawares by anything that is to come, because, for Him, there is no 'past' and no 'to come.' These categories have meaning only from the restricted viewpoint of the creatures whom He has made. We cannot know the future, nor can we grasp how everything in the universe works together according a purpose that only God can see. Because our understanding is so imperfect when measured against the Divine omniscience, we cannot hope to understand the nature of reality other than by taking as our starting-point what God reveals.

Augustine believes that it is by reflection upon the omniscience of God that we discover an important truth – indeed, *the* important

truth – about the Divine economy: a truth that answers comprehensively the questions that the doctrine of the Fall seems to invite. God knew from the beginning that the Fall would happen. To sacrifice grammar to meaning somewhat, God knows eternally that Adam would sin. This fact does not reduce or qualify Adam's free will, nor does it take anything away from his guilt. In his critique of Cicero's *De divinatione* at *De civitate Dei* 5:9–10, and in his discussion of the same question at *De libero arbitrio* 3:1:1–3:4:11, Augustine explains at length that the Divine prescience or foreknowledge is not the *cause* of Adam's sin. Cicero denies the existence of fate because he thinks that, if there is fate, there can be no free will. Augustine addresses a Christian version of the same problem. Some people suppose that, if God foreknows what we will do, then, since His foreknowledge cannot err, we must necessarily do what He has foreknown, and that our wills therefore are not free. But Augustine's answer to this difficulty is simple: God in His omniscience foreknows what we will freely will.[68] God foreknew the entry of sin into the world, but He did not will it. Adam was created with freedom to choose for himself, and it was therefore always possible that he would *not* sin. But God knew from all eternity that he would in fact do so, and so would incur damnation for himself and all his descendants. From all eternity, however, He resolved that the loss inflicted upon His creation by the Fall, though immense, would not be total. In a world made by a good God, total evil is impossible.

It is at this point that some relief is brought to the scene of detriment and ruin created by the Fall. On the one hand, considered with respect to his unassisted will, fallen man is morally powerless. It is impossible for him to save himself by any effort of his own. He cannot perform any act that might undo the damage wrought by Adam and Eve, because that damage itself conditions every choice that it is open to him to make. It is not that he has no choice; but he cannot choose in any way that is not motivated by self-love, however effectively disguised. On the other hand, it is God's eternal will that a remnant of the human race – only a small remnant, Augustine in-

sists[69] – should be rescued from the general collapse and made capable of salvation. God has chosen to effect this rescue by restoring moral freedom to some men through the gift of His grace: by repairing their vitiated wills and so reinstating in them the possibility of righteous choice; that is, of selfless choice ordered towards God. The rescue is not complete. Even those whom God has elected to redeem must contend with their lower selves for as long as they are on earth. They have constantly to wage war, as Augustine likes to express it (again echoing St Paul),[70] against their sinful inclinations.[71] It is only in heaven that the souls of the redeemed will be free from all sinful impulses. Then, their wills will be as incapable of willing what is wrong as our wills are now incapable of willing our own misery.[72] But the grace of God restores at least the possibility of righteous conduct in this life to those who receive it. Those to whom it is given can escape, even if not completely and not without effort, from the tyranny of self-love to which the rest of us are in thrall.

It is essential to understand that the grace of God cannot be earned or in any way deserved by those who receive it.[73] This is a conviction that Augustine states more and more emphatically as his thought develops, especially in response to Pelagianism. No one of Adam's descendants, as such, is either less or more depraved than any other. God's grace is *gratis data*, 'freely given': it is an unmerited gift, conferred upon a few chosen – predestined – members of the human race. These members, marked out from all eternity, are the Elect, granted the capacity for salvation in a world otherwise full of condemned and helpless sinners. Grace is the necessary condition of all right choice. It is 'prevenient'; that is, every good work that we do follows from it and is a result of it, and no good work can precede it.[74]

> God's mercy calls us, but not as rewarding the merits of faith: the merits of faith follow His calling; they do not precede it ... Unless, therefore, the mercy of God in calling precedes, no one can even believe and so begin to be justified and to receive the power to do good works.[75]

> The grace of God, which both begins a man's faith and enables it to persevere to the end, is not given according to our merits; rather, it is given according to His own most secret and at the same time most just, wise and beneficent will; since 'those whom He did predestinate, them He also called.'[76]

We do not know why the number of the Elect is so small: Augustine suggests at one point that it corresponds to the number of the fallen angels.[77] Nor do we know why God has predestined some rather than others to receive His grace, or a few rather than all. If all have died in Adam, yet not all are to be saved, are we not impelled to the outrageous conclusion that Adam had more power to destroy than Christ has to redeem? This is one of the questions posed by the Pelagians, and Augustine is aware of how pertinent it is; but we can, he thinks, only hazard pious conjectures. Again, the difficulty is one that we lack the *intellectual* resources to solve.[78] We know that the great majority of the human race is reprobate. We know that only a minority is endowed with the grace that enables those who belong to it to be virtuous. We know that damnation and salvation are different facets of God's goodness: that damnation shows His justice and salvation His mercy.[79] But we know these things only by a faith that goes beyond philosophy and makes true philosophy – true understanding – possible.

What led Augustine to put such stringent constructions on what the Bible teaches? This question brings us to the fourth foundation of his moral epistemology: the driving force of controversy. The fact that Augustine devoted so much attention to an analysis of grace and predestination is due mainly, even if not entirely, to his encounters with the heresy known as Pelagianism, so named after its supposed founder, the British monk Pelagius (ca 354–418).[80] Augustine was involved more or less continuously in the Pelagian controversy from 411 until his death in 430. To it he contributed a number of letters and several treatises long regarded as authoritative expositions of the Catholic doctrine of grace.[81] Pelagianism may be de-

scribed as the most damaging and plausible heresy yet faced – perhaps ever to be faced – by the Catholic Church. We are accustomed to write it off as a failed or abortive version of Christianity; but its strength in the fifth century must not be underestimated. It is important to see Pelagianism 'as a religious tendency in its own right and not as mere opposition to prevailing doctrine.'[82] Its rise and widespread acceptance confronted the Catholic Church with a theological crisis of major proportions.

Pelagianism might fairly be called the kind of Christianity to which the plain man is inclined to subscribe. It owes its considerable attractiveness to the fact that it accords so closely with a commonsense view of justice. It is an attempt to deal with a problem that we have already identified: how can Adam's transgression have dethroned from a state of grace those who did not commit it? How is it possible for a just God to impute to us the sin of another? Pelagianism answers this difficulty by declining to believe that God does impute to us the sin of another. Stating its tenets briefly, it teaches that Adam's sin harmed only himself; that his guilt has not been transmitted to his posterity; that we do not inherit physical or spiritual death from him; that we can act rightly by our own moral efforts; and that we can make ourselves acceptable to God by so doing. Despite St Jerome, who describes him as a fat Scotsman with a mind addled by porridge,[83] we have every reason to think that Pelagius himself was a formidable and exemplary person. Even so determined an opponent as Augustine is pleased to call him *vir sanctus*: a saintly man.[84] According to the Pelagians, man is able to accomplish his own salvation. The disciple of Christ is an individual not unlike the self-contained Stoic sage, able to form a rational understanding of his predicament in the world and to redeem himself by the exertion of his own will. It may be, indeed, that, to this extent, Stoicism exercised a definite influence upon the Pelagian view of salvation.

But, however well-intentioned and attractive, the Pelagians' commitment to the idea of human self-perfectibility cannot be rec-

onciled with the teachings of Scripture and the Church. 'As in Adam all die,' St Paul tells us, 'even so in Christ shall all [those who are to be saved] be made alive.'[85] If human beings could be virtuous, and hence saved, without Divine intervention, why was it necessary for God to become man? If the Pelagian understanding of Original Sin is correct, what does Christ's death atone for, and why do we need the grace that is transmitted to us through the Church? To the orthodox, the Incarnation has meaning only in relation to the need for redemption from without. To the Pelagians, Christ's life and death have set us an example of virtue to which we may look in our efforts to surmount human weakness, but Christ is not our Redeemer. Pelagianism, it has been said, 'presents Christ's work as if it were the work of a model teacher or model doctor ... and not the work of a victim whose merits justify man.'[86] In doing so, it assails the very heart of the Christian faith and Christian ecclesiology. Not only does it negate the doctrine of the Atonement; also, it renders the Church's existence, insofar as the Church is conceived as the community of grace on earth, largely meaningless. The project of defeating the Pelagians was therefore one that Augustine saw as having supreme importance. 'You introduce a race of men,' he says to the semi-Pelagian Julian of Eclanum, 'who can please God by the law of nature without the faith of Christ. This is the chief reason why the Church of Christ detests you.'[87] For Augustine, belief in the moral incapacity of every single human being is an absolute prerequisite of Christian belief.

(c) The Two Cities

At the same time as he was working out his views on damnation, grace and predestination, Augustine was developing the account of world history that we find expressed through his image of the two Cities: the City of God and the Earthly City – the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena*. The image is, of course, most associated with the work usually regarded as Augustine's masterpiece, *De civitate Dei*,

begun as a defence of Christianity against pagan reproaches following the sack of Rome in 410. But we find the same theme and imagery in a number of other places; the idea of the two Cities had apparently formed in Augustine's mind before he commenced to write *De civitate Dei* in 413. He tells us in his *De Genesi ad litteram*, the literal commentary on the Book of Genesis composed some time before he began *De civitate Dei*, that he is intending to write a book on the nature of the two *civitates* brought into being by the fall of the angels.[88]

Augustine's imagery has a deliberately biblical resonance: 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O City of God,' says the Psalmist.[89] But it is plausible to suppose that Augustine had in his mind also the familiar idea of the Stoic 'cosmopolis.'[90] His two 'Cities' look very like expressions of Stoic cosmopolitanism reformulated in Christian language and interpreted in terms of a Platonist 'other' world. His choice of terminology has the potential to mislead, and his use of it is not always consistent. Viewed broadly, however, his meaning is clear. The two Cities are not temporal entities. They do not exist in a determinate place or at a particular time. They are the two all-embracing categories – the 'camps,' as Fr Coplestone puts it[91] – into which mankind has been divided by sin throughout the world's history. The City of God is not what some of Augustine's medieval admirers took it to be. It is in no way synonymous with the institutional Church, the Church Militant on earth. It is the *communio sanctorum*: the society of grace, the entire community, past and present, of those who love God without dissimulation. The City of God is the Church, but it is the Church in the widest sense. Its citizens are those who live 'according to God.'[92] They are of three kinds: those angels who remained loyal to God and who serve Him eternally in heaven; those of the Elect who have already died and whose souls are now in heaven awaiting the resurrection of the body; and those of the Elect who are at any given time alive on earth. This last category Augustine calls the *civitas Dei peregrina*, the pilgrim City of God. The City of God has an earthly contingent, but this contingent

is only a small, and for the time being exiled, fraction of its total membership.

By the same token, the Earthly City, though exemplified most clearly in the great pagan empires – Assyria, Babylon, Rome[93] – is not any one earthly State, nor does the expression symbolize the totality of earthly States; although, once again, Augustine's language is not always unambiguous. The Earthly City is the community, the 'camp,' of all those, past and present, from whose hearts love of God is shut out by love of self. Sometimes Augustine calls it the *civitas diaboli*: the Diabolic City. Just as Christ is King of the City of God, so the Earthly City is ruled by the devil. The Earthly City is the society of those to whom, in the Divine economy, the gift of grace is not given. It is a society that lives 'according to man,' not 'according to God.' Again, its population consists of three categories: the fallen angels; those of the reprobate who have died and now suffer with those angels the punishment of hell; and those of the reprobate who are for the time being alive on earth. Without departing from Augustine's meaning, we might suggest that the two Cities have potential or future memberships also: the souls, as yet uncreated, of those who, whether Elect or reprobate, will be born during those ages of history remaining before the Final Judgement.

The two Cities are therefore not 'cities' in the ordinary sense. They are what one might call moral categories. They are supernatural communities whose existence traverses the whole of history from the Creation down to the time of Christ's Second Coming. They are united, as every community can be said to be united, by what their members love: by the goals and values to which they are committed (see p. 63). The City of God is constituted by love of God and the Earthly City by love of self.[94] Their supernatural populations are already separated; they have heaven and hell as their respective abodes. But the earthly members of the two Cities are for the time being indistinguishable. 'The two Cities,' Augustine says, 'are mingled together from the beginning down to the end.'[95]

He regards this as a fact of great significance, and he refers to it often. Every created soul belongs to one or other of the two Cities, but there are no distinguishing marks that might enable us to discover who belongs to which. Appearances, indeed, can be misleading. Many of those now alive who might seem to be among the saved are not, and many who might seem to be among the damned will be saved. 'Few share in the inheritance of God, while many participate in its outward signs.'[96] Earthly status and outward displays of piety give us no clue. Since the coming of Christ, no one can be saved who is not a member of the visible Church;[97] but Augustine knows that the visible Church is a *corpus permixtum*: a body that numbers hypocrites and time-servers among its members as well as the righteous. He does not doubt that many who belong to the Church in appearance belong in truth to the Earthly City.

> There are some … who hold the office of shepherds so that they may tend the flock of Christ; but there are others who occupy that office so that they may enjoy temporal honours and the advantages of this world.[98]

> No man can with certainty be said … to belong to [the Elect] until he has gone forth from this world. But in this human life, which is a state of trial upon earth, he who seems to stand must beware lest he fall; for … those who will not persevere are, by the most prescient will of God, mingled with those who will persevere.[99]

The present world, considered in relation to the other, higher, world in which Augustine believes both as a Christian and a Platonist, is only a place of pilgrimage or exile. While they are in it, the members of the two Cities dwell side by side, mixed like wheat and chaff on the threshing-floor. For the time being, the chosen and the unchosen make use of the earth's resources together, and together endure the tribulations of this life. Indeed, the righteous seem often to suffer a larger share of sorrow than the unrighteous.[100] The City of God and the Earthly City will be visibly divided only at the end of history, when Christ will come to judge the quick and the dead. Then, the wheat will be separated from the chaff, the sheep from

the goats, and each City will 'receive its own end, of which there is no end.'[101]

Augustine's theme of the two Cities is, in short, a metaphor through which is articulated a Christian conception of history. Leaving aside its many divagations, *De civitate Dei* is 'a presentation of Christianity in the form of Biblical history from Genesis to Revelation. Beginning with the Creation and the Fall it unfolds God's plan of salvation through Christ as revealed in Scripture.'[102] One is on the whole reluctant to call this Christian conception a 'philosophy' of history.[103] It is really no more than an interpretation of what is recorded and foretold in the Bible. Augustine does, however, present it explicitly in opposition to the Stoic doctrine of eternal recurrence.[104] History is a narrative, a progressive 'salvation history,'[105] moving from a beginning towards an end. In view of the sack of Rome and similar calamities, Augustine was inclined to think that the narrative must be nearing its close. Like many of his Christian contemporaries, he regarded these things as signs that the world's time is running out.[106] 'According to his favourite sixfold division of history,'[107] Professor Markus observes,[108] 'the world was now in its old age.' History is not, as the Stoic philosophers suggest, an eternal cyclical re-enactment of the same events of creation and destruction; nor is it the chronicle of the achievements of Rome or any other empire. It is the story of the two Cities as they make their way towards their predestined goals. History is not working towards some end or culmination *in* this world. The true destination of mankind, whether it be damnation or salvation, does not lie within history, but beyond it.

* * * * *

Augustine's doctrines of sin, predestination and grace rest, we have suggested, upon four foundations: his own profound awareness of the reality of sin; the confirmation of this awareness that he found in the biblical story of the Fall; the conviction that philosophical en-

quiry can do no more than elaborate the revealed truths of faith; and the urgent need to defend Catholic orthodoxy against the subversive influence of Pelagianism. Taken as a whole, these doctrines furnish the clearest possible indication of the way in which Christianity contradicts some of the defining assumptions and conclusions of classical ethics. On the one hand, Augustine subscribes to a version of the venerable theory of natural law. He acknowledges a rational principle that, expressed at its broadest, enjoins us to treat others as we should wish to be treated by them. His understanding of this principle involves elements derived not from Scripture alone, but from Platonism, Stoicism and the interpretations of those traditions formulated by the earlier Fathers. On the other hand, he thinks that what the Bible teaches about human nature and the human will tells against the very conclusion that the natural law doctrine traditionally supports. He holds that, because our wills are so grievously damaged by sin, our moral good cannot be achieved by 'natural,' that is, by unaided, reason.

This is a conclusion that, from our point of view, has momentous consequences. To accept it is to deny that political activity as such can have the ethical significance attributed to it by the main stream of classical philosophy from Plato onwards. For Augustine, the political community cannot be a moral community in the way that it was for the Greeks and Romans. Classical political thought as exemplified in Plato, Aristotle and their intellectual descendants takes it for granted that certain ethical goals are prescribed for us by nature, and that we are equipped by nature to make free and rational choices with respect to those goals. We can, of course, choose ill rather than well. Our activity can be supported by incorrect opinions and false values; we can be diverted from the truth by rhetoric or misled by greed or short-sightedness. But at least we can choose, and by choosing well we can make the good life available to ourselves. For Plato, justice is produced by the wise guidance of philosophy; for Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is achievable through the correct deployment of intellectual virtue; for the Stoics, harmony and justice

are the productions of *recta ratio*, 'right reason.' Moreover, right reason is educated reason. Righteous choice and action are made possible for us by the way in which our minds and wills are formed through association with our fellow human beings. Man is by nature a political animal; redemption lies in our capacity to make use of the moral opportunities presented by a life shared with other rational creatures. Our good lies in this world and is connected intimately with the life of citizenship, either of the literal *polis* of Plato or Aristotle or of the cosmopolis of Stoicism: a world-family embracing all who have learnt to perceive in one another an equality of rational capacity and moral worth.

For Augustine, however, full and authentic moral choice is open to individuals, if it is open at all, not through natural reason perfected by education and social interaction, but only through the prevenient grace of God. Those to whom this grace is not given cannot by their own exertions achieve any good whatsoever. Only his membership of the *civitas Dei* or the *civitas terrena* has any bearing on the ethical good of the individual. Each of these *civitates* is, as we have suggested, a kind of cosmopolis. The idea of two Cities to which the entire human race belongs clearly owes something to Greek and Roman Stoicism, even if Augustine's inspiration and language are primarily biblical. But the ends to which the Cities are ordered lie entirely in a world beyond the present one; nor can anyone choose which of the Cities to belong to. Human reason does not create them, nor are they sustained by the participation or deliberation of their members: those members are not 'citizens' in any way that would have been intelligible to Plato, Aristotle or the Stoics. Man's final end, whether good or bad, is not found in this world and cannot be accomplished in this life. To this extent, the Christian gospel appears to have defined out of existence a large part of the understanding of politics and morality represented in the philosophy of classical antiquity. In view of this, how are we to account for the origin and purposes of the State, and what can we say about the nature and meaning of political life?

NOTES

1. Mark 16:16.
2. See A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1995); E.V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911); J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
3. See especially R.W. Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism in the History of Political Thought*, vol. 1 (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), ch. 5; also C.N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943); E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); R. Doran, *Birth of a World View: Early Christianity in Its Jewish and Pagan Context* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); R.M. Grant, *Augustus to Constantine: the Thrust of the Christian Movement into the Roman World* (London: Collins, 1972); J.F. Kelly, *The World of the Early Christians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997); R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
4. See Seneca, *Epistulae* 90:5-32, paraphrasing Posidonius.
5. Cf Cicero, *De republica* 3:22:33: 'There really is a law – right reason in accordance with nature – that applies universally, and which is unchanging and eternal. It summons to duty by its commands, and by its prohibitions it deters from wrongdoing … It is never right to countermand this law by legislation, nor is it right to restrict its operation; and to abolish it entirely is impossible. Neither the Senate nor the people can absolve us from its obligations, and we need not look beyond ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it. Nor will there be one law for Rome and another for Athens; nor one for now and another for the future. Rather, there will be one eternal and unchangeable law, valid for all nations and all times.' See also Cicero's remark, at *De officiis* 3:5, that it requires no enacted law to tell us that 'it is more contrary to nature for a man to take something from his neighbour and so to derive benefit from his neighbour's loss than is death, poverty, pain or anything else that can affect either our bodies or our external circumstances.'
6. Romans 2:11–15.

7. 'Men of Athens: I see that you are by way of being a god-fearing people. On my way here, I took note of your objects of religion. In particular, I came across an altar bearing the inscription: "To an Unknown God." I now reveal to you Who it is that you worship without knowing Him ... The God Who created the world and everything in it, and Who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in shrines made by human hands. It is not because He has need of anything that He accepts the services of men. For it is He Himself Who is the giver of life, breath and everything else. He created the whole of mankind from a single origin, to populate the whole face of the earth. He determined the phases of their history and the limits of their territory. They were to search for God and, perhaps, to find and touch Him. Indeed, He is very close to us all, for in Him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have also said, "We too are His children."' The reference in the last sentence is to the Stoic Aratus of Chios, and possibly also to Cleanthes of Assos: see Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 5.
8. See T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000). See also J. Barclay and J. Sweet (eds), *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); P. Borgen, *Philo, John, and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar's Press, 1987); *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996).
9. *Contra Celsum* 5:40.
10. *De corona* 5; 6; *De testimonio animae* 5.
11. *Divinae institutiones* 3:8.
12. *De officiis* 1:84.
13. For numerous references with commentary see R.W. and A.J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, repr. 1962), vol. 1, chs 8–12.
14. *De fuga saeculi* 15.
15. *Confessions* 1:14.
16. A full, though now rather dated and not always objective, account of Augustine's philosophy is given in E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Augustine of Hippo* (London: Gollancz, 1960). See also W.S. Babcock (ed.), *The Ethics of St. Augustine* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991); J. M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*; E. TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*.

17. *De civitate Dei* 8:5. I tend to use the expressions 'Platonism' and 'Neoplatonism' interchangeably, simply because the distinction is itself not clear in Augustine; or, at any rate, the nuances are not capable of being made clear in a work of this kind. It is most generally satisfactory to regard him as a Christian Neoplatonist, but sometimes he refers to Plato himself, and he is influenced by Patristic writers – Origen, for instance – who are themselves straightforward Platonists.

18. Genesis 1:31; cf. *Epistulae* 140:2; *De libero arbitrio* 1:8:18; 1:15:32.

19. See, for example, *De Trinitate* 14:15:21: Even the ungodly 'think of eternity, and rightly blame and rightly praise many things in the morals of men. And how do they judge these things, if not by those rules in which they see how men ought to live even though they do not live in that way themselves? ... Where do they see these rules? For they do not see them in their own nature, since these things are undoubtedly seen by the mind, and the mind is ... mutable, yet these rules are seen as immutable by anyone who can see them at all ... Where, then, are these rules written, by which even the unrighteous man recognizes what is righteous: in which he discerns that he ought to have what he does not have? Where are they written, if not in the book of that Light which is called Truth, from which every righteous law is copied and transferred into the heart of the man who acts righteously – not by moving into it, but by being as it were impressed onto it in the way that the impression of a signet passes into the wax without leaving behind the signet itself?'

20. Cf. *Republic* 507A–509C.

21. See e.g. *Soliloquiae* 1:1:3; 1:8:15; *De Trinitate* 12:15:24; 14:15:21; *Enarrationes in psalmos* 57:1; 118:25:4; 119; 145:5; *Sermo* 18:4; 23:1; *De libero arbitrio* 1:6:15; 1:8:18; 2:9:26–27; 2:10:29; 2:19:52; *Contra Faustum* 22:27; *De ordine* 2:8:25; *De civitate Dei* 19:13.

22. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 57:1; *In Ioannis evangelium* 49:12; cf. Ambrose, *Epistulae* 73:10; *De fuga saeculi* 15; Ambrosiaster, *Commentaria in epistolam ad Romanos* 3:20; Jerome, *Commentaria in epistolam ad Galatas* 3:2 *Commentaria in Isaiam* 24:6.

23. Psalm 58:1.

24. Tobit 4:15.

25. Genesis 1:26.

26. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 57:1; and cf. *In Ioannis evangelium* 49:12: 'When a man is born, he is born with death already with him, for he inherits sin from

Adam. Hence the Apostle says: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" [Romans 5:12]. Behold, the first day of death ... Then he grows and begins to approach the years of reason, so that he is able to know the law of nature that has been implanted into every man's heart: Do not do to another what you do not wish to have done to yourself. Is this learnt from the pages of a book? Is it not somehow read in our very nature? Do you want to suffer robbery? Of course not. Behold the law in your own heart, then: do not wish to do what you do not wish to suffer. Yet this law is transgressed by men: behold, the second day of death. The Law was also Divinely given through God's servant Moses ... and this also was despised: behold, the third day of death. What remains? The Gospel also comes: the kingdom of heaven is preached; Christ is everywhere proclaimed. He threatens hell; He promises life everlasting: and even that is despised! Men transgress the Gospel: behold, the fourth day of death ... But is mercy to be denied even to such men as these? God forbid; for the Lord does not deem it unworthy that He should come and raise up even them.'

27. See especially Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol 1, chs 1–4.

28. See, for example, T.W. Bryn, *The Psychology of Conversion with Special Reference to Saint Augustine* (London: Allenson, 1935); W.G. Cole, *Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955); K. Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine's Writings on Women* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995); J. La Porte and F.E. Weaver, 'Augustine and Woman: Relationships and Teachings,' *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981). For an (unconvincing) argument that Augustine was a covert homosexual, see J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); cf. A.G. Soble, 'Correcting some Misunderstandings about St. Augustine's Sex Life,' *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11:4 (2002). See also P. Fredriksen, 'Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 37 (1986); E.J. Hundert, 'Augustine and the Sources of the Divided Self,' *Political Theory* 20 (1992); R.J. O'Connell, *Images of Conversion in Saint Augustine's Confessions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995).

29. But note the comment of Fr Martindale: '[T]he evidence for an estimate of the "character" of St Augustine is almost equally distributed throughout his works; for in such matters one must look out for unconscious self-revelation

… rather than deliberate attempts at self-explanation' (*A Monument to St Augustine*, ed. M.C. Darcy et al. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930), p. 81).

30. *Confessions* 8:7.
31. *Confessions* 1:6–10.
32. *Confessions* 2:4–10.
33. *Confessions* 2:6.
34. *Confessions* 1:7.
35. Cf. H.A. Deane: '[I]f we have really understood his religious teachings, we can virtually deduce from them his views of the nature of man, society and the state' (*The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 14).
36. Genesis 1–2.
37. *De civitate Dei* 13:3; 14:10–15.
38. *De civitate Dei* 14:10.
39. Genesis 2:16–17.
40. See *Confessions* 3:6–7; *De libero arbitrio* 1:2:4. See also G.R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Régis Jolivet, *Le problème du mal d'après saint Augustin* (2nd ed., Paris: Archives de Philosophie, 1936); M.L. Burton, *The Problem of Evil: A Criticism of the Augustinian Point of View* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909).
41. *Confessions* 7:5.
42. *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* 6.
43. *De civitate Dei* 19:13.
44. *Enchiridion* 12.
45. See, e.g., *Confessions* 13:9: *pondus meum, amor meus; eo feror quocumque feror* – 'my weight is my love; by it I am borne wherever I am borne.' Our moral 'resting place' is determined for us by the weight of the love that pulls us to it. The idea that the place of everything in the universe is determined by a kind of natural weight is one that Augustine takes over from Greek physics. See Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Augustine*, p. 134.
46. *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, 6; 21; *Enchiridion* 12; 27; 96; *De civitate Dei* 12:1; 7–8.
47. See, e.g., *De libero arbitrio* 2:1:1.
48. Ecclesiastes 7:29.

49. *De civitate Dei* 14:11.
50. *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 2:17:27; cf. *De civitate Dei* 14:10–15; and see R. Penaskovic, 'The Fall of the Soul in Saint Augustine: *A Quaestio Disputata*,' *Augustinian Studies*, 17 (1986).
51. Genesis 3:17.
52. *Enchiridion* 23–25.
53. *Epistulae* 190:3:12.
54. *De civitate Dei* 21:12.
55. Romans 9:21.
56. *De civitate Dei* 13:3.
57. *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* 2:5:9.
58. *Retractationes* 1:9:4–6; *In Ioannis evangelium* 22:9; *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* 2:5:9; *Ad Simplicianum* 1:2:21.
59. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 434D–449A.
60. See, e.g., *De libero arbitrio* 2:1:3: 'Justice is applauded as a good because it condemns sin and praises righteous acts; but how could this be done if man did not have free will? An act would be neither sinful nor righteous if it were not done voluntarily'; and *Epistulae* 173:2: 'Who does not know that a man is condemned for no other reason than that his evil will deserves it, and that no man is saved who does not have a good will?' See also Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Augustine*, ch. 3.
61. Not, he means, from the porch, the *stoa*, of the Stoics; and cf. Acts 3:11.
62. Wisdom 1:1.
63. *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7.
64. *In Ioannis evangelium*. 29:6; cf. *De vera religione* 24:45; The sentiment is a resonance, no doubt conscious, of Tertullian's maxim *credibile est, quia ineptum est* (*De carne Christi* 5:4), usually misquoted as *Credo quia absurdum est.* See also TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p. 73.
65. *Confessions* 3:6.
66. *De civitate Dei* 12:13–14, 20; and see *Contra academicos* 3:19:42 and *De ordine* 2:5:16, on those philosophers who despise the humble form in which God has appeared to mankind; and *De anima et eius origine* 4:2, on those who think that 'man can discuss his own quality or his whole nature as if no part of himself escaped him.'

67. See especially *Confessions* 11:14:12–30:40; *De civitate Dei* 11:4–6; see also R.W. Dyson, 'St Augustine's Remarks on Time,' *Downside Review* 100 (1982); R. Suter, 'Augustine on Time with Some Criticisms from Wittgenstein,' *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 16 (1962).
68. See especially *De libero arbitrio* 3:7 for a succinct statement of this point.
69. *De civitate Dei* 13:23; 21:12; *Epistulae* 190:3:12.
70. Galatians 5:17.
71. *Ad Simplicianum* 1:2:21; *De civitate Dei* 21:15.
72. *Enchiridion* 105.
73. *Enchiridion* 30; *Ad Simplicianum*. 1:2:7; *De dono perseverantiae* 13:33.
74. *Retractationes* 1:9; *In Ioannis evangelium* 22:9; *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* 2:5:9.
75. *Ad Simplicianum* 1:2:7.
76. *De dono perseverantiae* 13:33, quoting Romans 8:30.
77. *Enchiridion* 28–30.
78. There is a clear account of Augustine's doctrine of grace and predestination, with numerous references, at TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, pp. 319–338. Augustine's best suggestion, perhaps, is that the gift of grace is not, strictly speaking, withheld from anyone, but that God has predestined to damnation those whom He foreknows will not accept it (*Epistulae* 102:2). This resembles the theory of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century century Jesuits Luis de Molina, Francisco Suarez and St Robert Bellarmine. See especially Molina's *Concordia*, ed. J. Rabeneck (Oña: Collegium Maximum, 1953).
79. *Epistulae* 190:3:12.
80. Some modern scholars are inclined to doubt that Pelagius was the founder of the heresy that bears his name; there is reason to believe that it originated with a Syrian teacher called Rufinus. See E. TeSelle, 'Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, Pelagius: Explorations in the Pre-History of the Pelagian Controversy,' *Augustinian Studies* 3 (1972). Pelagianism was condemned by the Council of Carthage in 418. Its modified relative semi-Pelagianism was condemned in 529 by the Council of Orange. These condemnations were repeated by the Council of Trent in 1546. See the works mentioned in n. 84.
81. Augustine's anti-Pelagian treatises are: *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*; *De spiritu et littera*; *De natura et gratia*; *De gestis Pelagii*; *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*; *De perfectione justitiae hominis*; *De nuptiis et concupiscen-*

tia; *Contra Iulianum*; *Contra duas epistolas pelagianorum*. At his death, Augustine left unfinished a treatise against the semi-Pelagian Julian of Eclanum. What there is of this work is known as *Opus imperfectum contra Iulianum*. He also gives a summary of Pelagianism in the last chapter of his *De haeresibus* of 428.

82. G. Bonner, 'Pelagianism and Augustine,' *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), p. 33.

83. See *Praefatio in Jeremias*, 1 and 3.

84. See G. de Plinval, *Pélage: ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme* (Lausanne: Librairie Payot, 1943); TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, ch. 5; B.R. Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1998); P. Brown, 'Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 19 (1968); R.F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (London: A. & C. Black, 1968); J. Ferguson, *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956). See also J.P. Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1980); R.H. Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, Patristic Monograph Series 15 (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1996).

85. I Corinthians 15:22. My interpolated gloss here reflects Augustine's own view as to the meaning of this text. Commenting on it at *De civitate Dei* 13:23 he says: 'It is not that all who die in Adam shall be made members of Christ, for the great majority will be punished in eternal death. Rather, [St Paul] uses the word "all" in both clauses because, just as no one dies in an animal body except in Adam, so no one is made alive in a spiritual body save in Christ.' Cf. I Corinthians 15:44–45; I Timothy 2:4.

86. E. Bréhier, *The History of Philosophy: The Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 4.

87. *Contra Iulianum* 4:3:23; and see 4:3:17: 'If men can … arrive at true faith, true virtue, true justice, true wisdom, without the faith of Christ, then Christ died in vain.'

88. *De Genesi ad litteram* 11:15:20.

89. Psalm 87:3.

90. By way of illustration, the following examples of Stoic cosmopolitanism may be noted:

> Just as the word πόλις (*polis*) is used in two senses, to mean both a place to live and the entire State and its citizen body, so is the whole universe a kind of *polis*, including gods and men, in which the gods

> rule and the men obey. Men and gods are able to have such relations with one another because both are possessors of reason. This is law by nature, and it is for this that all things have come into being (Chrysippus, in H. von Arnim (ed.), *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1964), vol 2, fr. 528.

> Let us understand that there are two communities: the one, which is truly great and truly common, embracing both gods and men, in which we look neither to this corner nor that, but measure the boundaries of our commonwealth by the sun; the other, that to which we have been assigned by accident of birth (Seneca, *De otio* 4).

> If our intellectual part is common, then reason, by possessing which we are rational creatures, is common also. If this is so, the reason that commands us what to do and what not to do is common also. If this is so, there is a common law. If this is so, we are fellow-citizens. If this is so, we are members of some political community. And if this is so, the world is a kind of commonwealth. For to what other political community will anyone say that every member of the human race belongs? (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4:4).

For some account of this cosmopolitanism and its context in Stoic philosophy, see Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 4.

91. *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2 (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1959), p. 100.
92. See *De civitate Dei* 15:1.
93. See *De civitate Dei* 16:17; 18:2.
94. 'Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the Earthly by love of self extending even to contempt of God; the Heavenly by love of God extending to contempt of self' (*De civitate Dei* 14:28).
95. *De civitate Dei* 18:54.
96. *Contra Faustum* 13:16; cf. *In Ioannis evangelium* 45:12.
97. See especially *De baptismo* 4:1:1, where Augustine reprises the position of Cyprian of Carthage, that 'No one can have God as his Father who does not have the Church as his Mother' (Cyprian, *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate* 6).
98. *Epistulae* 208:2; cf. *In Ioannis evangelium* 25:10.
99. *De dono perseverantiae* 13:33.
100. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 90[2]:1.
101. *De civitate Dei* 18:54.

102. J.H.S. Burleigh, *The City of God: A Study of St Augustine's Philosophy* (London: Nisbet, 1949), p. 153.
103. Cf. J. O'Meara, *Charter of Christendom: The Significance of The 'City of God'* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 54–56.
104. *De civitate Dei* 12:10–13.
105. The expression is Oscar Cullman's (*Salvation in History* (London: SCM, 1967)); Professor Markus is, I think, right to prefer the term 'sacred history': see *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), Appendix D. See also G.L. Keyes, *Christian Faith and the Interpretation of History: A Study of St. Augustine's Philosophy of History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).
106. *Sermo* 81:8; *Epistulae* 2:2:2.
107. 'Five ages of the world ... have now been completed and the sixth is under way. Of these ages, the first extends from the origin of the human race ... down to Noah, who built the ark at the time of the Flood. The second extends from that time down to Abraham ... [T]he third age extends from Abraham down to the time of David the king; the fourth from David down to that captivity under which the people of God passed away into Babylon; and the fifth from that exile down to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. With His coming, the sixth age has entered upon its course, so that the spiritual grace which in earlier times was known only to a few Patriarchs and prophets may now be revealed to all the nations' (*De catechizandis rudibus* 22:39).
108. *Saeculum*, p. 22.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATE IN A SINFUL WORLD

In view of the diversity of its sources, we cannot give a satisfactory account of Augustine's views as to the origins and functions of government without adopting some principle of organization. With this in mind, we may say that he considers these things from three perspectives, each of which illustrates under a different aspect the implications of the Fall for political life and experience. The State has come into being, and continues in being, for three reasons.[1] It is a consequence and an expression of sin; it is a means of reducing or containing the material harm that the behaviour of fallen men produces; and it is a disciplinary order, by which sinners are chastised and the righteous made ready for their eternal reward. In the first and third sections of this chapter we shall consider each of these perspectives in turn. In the second and fourth sections we shall deal with two issues that are closely bound up with them: Augustine's understanding of the character of earthly justice, and his doctrine of obligation.

Before we begin we must note that this orderly approach is a contrivance. It needs to be prefaced by a caveat reiterating what we said in the Introduction: that Augustine's political thought is nowhere presented as a unity. The three perspectives that we have identified – and we shall come across them again in our next two chapters – are not distinct in reality. Augustine resorts to them, or to combinations of them, at will, according to the particular point that he is making at the time. It is useful for our purposes to examine them separately, but it should be borne in mind that this separa-

tion is only an expository device. To arrange Augustine's ideas into 'sections' is inevitably to misrepresent their complexity.[2]

(a) The State as a Consequence and an Expression of Sin

We have seen that Augustine's account of the human condition has as its central tenet the denaturing effects of sin. The present predicament of mankind is entirely explicable in terms of Adam and Eve's fall from grace. First and foremost, sin is a disorder of the immortal part of man. It is an affliction of the soul or mind or will. As such, its final and most important consequences are eternal. But its denaturing effect has proximate and temporal consequences also. Augustine thinks that it is by examining the impact of sin upon the exterior life and behaviour of men that we can account for the origin and nature of politics.

He takes as his point of departure the observation that all men, whether sinful or righteous, are gregarious by nature. Each individual is 'drawn by the laws of his nature' to seek and value the society of his own kind.[3] Augustine assigns to this classical truism a biblical explanation. When He made the world, God might have chosen to populate it by fashioning many individual human beings, just as He fashioned many individual beasts. According to the Book of Genesis, He did not do this. He made one man only, and the woman was brought forth not separately, but from the side of the man.[4] The genealogy of the human race is therefore traceable to a single source. God created mankind in this way for a purpose. His intention was that members of the human race should be 'bound together in their society not only by similarity of race, but also by the bond of kinship.'[5] Man was created to love God, but he was created also with a love of his fellows that we may regard as instinctive. We are sociable creatures because we are all of one blood.

> There is ... no one in the entire human family, even those by whom our love is not reciprocated, towards whom kindly affection is not due by reason of the bond of shared humanity.[6]

As well as its biblical foundation, it is worth noticing how clearly this idea of a 'bond of shared humanity' reflects the ethical conceptions of Stoicism with which we know that Augustine was familiar. According to the Stoics, each individual is equipped from birth with a moral faculty called οἰκείωσις (*oikeiosis*). As he grows in wisdom, this faculty enables him to understand that all men are equally deserving of regard. 'All men are brothers and kinsmen by nature,' says Epictetus of Hierapolis, 'since all are sons of God.'[7] In this respect, as in so many others, the truths that pagan philosophy had perceived only dimly are completed by scriptural revelation.

God's command that we love one another is thus underwritten by a natural tie: a tie holding as between members of the same family. We have seen also that God provided the human family with a law of nature. A law of conscience is written into every heart. We know by nature that we ought not do to others what we would not want others to do to us. Now, because they have become what they are, men routinely transgress this law. They transgress it even though it has been reinforced by the law of Scripture. But had human beings not vitiated the righteous will with which they were made, the law of nature would have been sufficient to guide their lives. Men would have lived together in spontaneous peace and cooperation without compulsion or punishment. No one would have stood in fear, or been the subject, of another because no one would have needed – or wanted – to exercise power over anyone else. Had man not fallen, coercive government would not have arisen. It would not have arisen because the psychological forces that generate and sustain political activity would have been absent.[8]

For Augustine, therefore, awareness of sin has added a new dimension to anthropology. Human beings are sociable creatures by nature, but they are not naturally political. All forms of rule came into being after the Fall, including the subjection of woman to man. 'Unto the woman He said ... thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.'[9] An important contrast thus arises with respect to one of the central assumptions of classical thought. Accord-

ing to Aristotle, it is 'by nature' that man is a *political* animal. Aristotle considers that it is our nature to govern and be governed, and that any creature of whom this is not true is either greater than human or less than human.[10] This is so because our ethical good can be completed only in and through the formative processes that life in a political community makes possible. Politics is therefore the 'master science': the science by which all other sciences having to do with human wellbeing are directed.[11] For Augustine, by contrast, the master science is theology, and theology, as grounded in the Bible, tells us that relationships of subordination and superordination were not part of God's plan in creating the world. His intention was that individuals should govern themselves by the light given to them by Him in Whose image they were made. God gave to Adam 'dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth';[12] but

> He did not intend that His rational creature, made in His own image, should have dominion over anything but the non-rational creation: not man over man, but man over the beasts. And this is why the righteous men of the earliest times were made herders of cattle rather than kings of men; for God intended to teach us by this what the relative position of His creatures is, and what the desert of sin.[13]

The human race thus originated in a condition of equality and autonomy. Neither the need nor the wish to be involved in political relationships is a defining part of what it is to be human. When the Bible tells us that man was made 'in the image of God,' this plainly does not mean that he resembles God in appearance. It means that he was made as a rational creature. Equality is the condition natural to human beings because it is the condition appropriate to creatures who share in the Divine property of reason.[14] Here again, it would be difficult not to see the influence of Stoicism as lending a definite colour to Augustine's Christian terminology. The third-century intellectual biographer Diogenes Laertius tells us that the Stoics Zeno of Citium, Cleanthes, Posidonius, Hecato and Chry-

sippus all understand a life of virtue as being 'one in which we refrain from everything that is forbidden by the law that is common to all things: that is, by right reason, which pervades everything and which is one and the same with God, Who is the ruler of all things.'[15]

How are we to account for the fact that relationships of power and dominion now exist even though God did not intend that they should? Once again, the Divine omniscience provides the answer. When He gave the law of nature to mankind, God knew already that humanity would render itself incapable of living by it. He foreknew that some men would come to be under the dominion of others, but He did not will it.

> God was not ignorant of the fact that man would sin and that, being thereby made subject to death himself, would propagate men doomed to die. God knew moreover that these mortals would progress to such enormities of sin that even the beasts ... would live in greater security and peace with their own kind than men would, whose race had been produced from one individual for the very purpose of commending concord.[16]

Political arrangements have become superimposed on the natural order by convention or artifice merely. How has this superimposition come about, and why does it continue? An explanatory device to which Augustine resorts often is the way in which the conditions that prevail in the modern world are prefigured and symbolized in the Old Testament. When it is decoded in the light of revelation, the coherence and plan of history is revealed, and in it we find the same lessons repeated continuously. From the Book of Genesis we discover that the first city of all, called Enoch, was founded by Cain, the firstborn son of Adam and Eve. But Cain was the archetypal homicide. He was an individual driven by envy and resentment to murder his own brother.[17] He exemplified 'the diabolic envy that the wicked entertain towards the good for no other reason than that they are good.'[18] Political association, of which Enoch was the first and typical instance, 'has its beginning

and end on earth, where there is no hope of anything beyond what can be seen in this world.'[19] 'Cain,' Augustine tells us, means 'possession': the very name of its founder shows that the first city was built for the sake of possessing a merely earthly felicity. 'Enoch' means 'dedication': the city so named was dedicated to the things of this world. Here, as not seldom elsewhere, Augustine's appeal to etymology is factitious; but he wrings from Scripture every nuance that might support his primary political contention: that the State originates in, and that political activity is driven by, base motives and unworthy purposes.

Many generations later, and in a different part of the world, the city of Rome also originated in an act of fratricide. Rome's walls were stained with blood from the first. Just as Cain slew Abel, Romulus slew Remus because his brother was also his rival: 'both wanted the glory of establishing the Roman commonwealth, but both could not have the glory in doing so that only one would have.'[20] Augustine finds the coincidence unremarkable. 'It is not surprising that this first specimen ... of crime should, long afterwards, find a corresponding crime at the foundation of that city which was destined to reign over so many nations.'[21] It is not surprising because the foundations of Cain and Romulus illustrate, each according to its own symbolism, a cardinal truth: that political association was inaugurated by men whose sinful hearts were filled with jealousy.[22] Had the Fall not occurred, the State and its devices of oppression and control would not have come into being anywhere on earth. Neither the need nor the desire for them would have been present in a world of harmonious and innocent relationships conducted under the law of nature. But our condition as it is now is not the condition in which God made us.

Contrary to what Plato and Aristotle think, therefore, we cannot attribute to politics as such anything that answers to the moral needs of human nature. By the same token, we cannot deduce from our present condition and propensities any conclusions as to what constitutional arrangements are 'naturally' right for us. Augustine com-

pletely abandons the classical habit of analyzing and comparing constitutions with a view to discovering the best or most natural form of association. For him, politics arises from impulses that, measured against the standard of the natural order, are abnormal or pathological. Since the coming of sin, and because of it, human beings have been perpetually at one another's throats. They are envious, aggressive and vindictive; they are full of selfish pride; they long for glory and adulation; they covet material riches and bodily pleasure. Each is above all devoured by what Augustine calls *libido dominandi*: the lust for mastery, the desire to have power over others.

> [The soul of man] supposes itself to have achieved some great thing if it is able to lord it over its fellows, that is, over other men. For it is a characteristic of the sinful soul to desire, and to claim as due to itself, that which is in truth due only to God ... But when it aspires to lord it even over those who are by nature its equals – that is, over its fellow men – this comes about through a wholly intolerable pride.[23]

The lust for mastery has its origin in a pride that will not accept that the Divinely-intended state of things is right: a pride that is 'a perverted imitation of God; for pride hates a fellowship of equality under God, and wishes to impose its own dominion upon equals, in place of God's rule.'[24]

The State is therefore an enduring witness to the moral disfigurement of the world. In its origin and continuance, it exemplifies the desire that human beings have to dominate and exploit one another. This is a fact deducible from Scripture and borne out by the lessons of experience. To reflect upon the history of the world is to see that political activity is the process by which men acquire and preserve for themselves those things that they want only because they are selfish and envious. *Avaritia*, *superbia*, *concupiscentia*, *invidia* – greed, pride, lust, jealousy: these are Augustine's terms for the passions that now rule the human heart. On the one hand, our rational nature has not been utterly destroyed by sin; we have not quite sunk to the level of the beasts. The law of nature is present in

us still, because nothing can efface entirely what God has created. But, on the other hand, nature cannot be effective in forming human conduct unless and until it is fortified by grace. We are capable still of being troubled in conscience, but conscience is not accompanied by a will strong enough to overcome the impulses to which self-love makes us subject. Indeed, our tendency is to react to the promptings of conscience by trying still harder to lose ourselves in self-destructive pleasures. A man's sense of guilt, Augustine remarks, will drive him out of himself as surely as smoke or a flood will drive him out of his house. Those who have a bad conscience do not respond to it by trying to correct their behaviour. Rather, 'they seek rest in trivia: in spectacles, in luxury, in evils of every kind. Why do they wish themselves well outwardly? Because things are not well with them inwardly, so that they may be joyful in conscience.'[25] We love the very things that are most productive of strife; and politics is strife, both in its origins and in the most typical acts of those who engage in it. As Augustine says repeatedly, the Earthly City is divided against itself.[26] It is divided against itself because there can be no unity where each individual is supreme in his own eyes; but a city divided against itself cannot stand.

On the face of it, Augustine's extreme pessimism with regard to the driving forces of human behaviour encounters some telling counter-examples. Has not love of country produced many magnanimous individuals and outstanding examples of honourable conduct? How can one fail to admire Marcus Regulus, who willingly suffered death at the hands of his enemies rather than be seen to break his word? Or the proud and self-reliant patriots – Lucius Valerius, Quintius Cincinnatus – who served the Roman commonwealth without thought of self and asked no reward? Here, surely, are people who by all ordinary standards are worthy of praise; and Augustine does indeed hold them in a kind of esteem.[27] Though they were mistaken in what they desired and loved, the men whom Rome's history celebrates have in some ways left us a valuable example. Augustine more than once suggests that God has allowed the

commonwealth of Rome to flourish because its heroes provide us with lessons, even if only imperfect lessons, in how righteous men ought to comport themselves.[28] If Gaius Mucius burnt off his own right hand to show an enemy what the men of Rome were made of, why should the Christian hesitate to offer up even his whole body for the kingdom of heaven? If Torquatus put his son to death for the sake of military discipline, what sacrifice is too great for the disciple of Christ? But in the final analysis we are not to regard such exploits as truly virtuous. Despite the concessions that he is prepared to make, Augustine ultimately regards the apparent altruism of pagan notables either as self-interested because motivated by pride or the desire for renown, or as vitiated by the wish to please false gods.

Considered with respect to its origins and most typical objectives, therefore, the State is both a result of sin and a continuing expression of sin. Like sickness, death and the other miseries of this world, it is a consequence of the Fall. It expresses the change effected in human nature and the human will by the self-love of Adam and Eve. The State is not, as it had been for Plato and Aristotle, a natural part of human life, nor is it a forum for the realization of human character and potential. It is an unnatural supervention upon the created order. It has been called into being by the fact that man's naturally sociable and co-operative disposition has been perverted by pride: by the pride that drives him always to want to be more than he is. It is a theatre of conflict and competition. Those figures from Rome's past whose exploits are recorded as examples of fortitude and patriotism are inspiring to a degree; but they were actuated nonetheless by a selfish longing for renown or by loyalty to gods and institutions that are not worthy of devotion.

(b) The Character of Earthly Justice

It is almost invariably Rome and her empire that Augustine has in mind when talking about politics. Inevitably so; his life was passed

in a public environment constituted entirely by the governmental mechanisms and ideas of the Roman Empire. That empire was by now a Christian empire, but its people were conscious of their past and proud of it, and they were by no means unanimously disposed to relinquish the values of the pagan commonwealth. Augustine's most memorable generalizations about the moral quality of earthly association are almost all framed in terms of instances drawn from the narrative of Roman history, and it is on the basis of such instances that his general view of the State is developed most fully. We must therefore give some attention to his analysis of Rome's political self-image.[29]

The Christian Roman Empire in which Augustine lived was a legal as well as a spiritual entity. This fact is a source of the long-term complications that we shall discuss in Chapter 5. Rome had been made Christian not only by the preaching of the evangelists and the examples of the martyrs, but by the decrees of the emperors. Toleration had been extended to Christianity by the emperor Constantine in 313, as one of the gestures accompanying his own conversion in the previous year. The conversion of Constantine brought the era of the persecutions to an end. In 380 – only seven years before Augustine's baptism – Theodosius I issued the first of a series of edicts by which Christianity was established as Rome's official religion and the celebration of pagan worship abolished.[30] But appearance and reality did not exactly coincide; the old order was hardly to be cleared away overnight. With unrelenting mockery, Augustine depicts the former religion of Rome as a cruel and ridiculous idolatry; but there is every reason to suppose that it was associated with powerful sentiments of devotion and cultural identity. Such sentiments were not erased by the formal proscription of pagan observance; perhaps they were in some ways strengthened by it. The abandonment of Rome's traditional pantheon was regarded by some as a shocking betrayal. The removal by imperial decree of the Altar of Victory from the Senate chamber in 383 was a symbolic act that incurred tremendous pagan resentment.[31]

Then, in 410, came an event that shook the civilized world: Rome herself, *Roma aeterna*, was entered and sacked by Alaric and the Visigoths.

The material damage done during the sack of 410 was by all accounts fairly slight; but it was far outweighed by the psychological impact of the invasion. It was easy to see the incursion of the Visigoths as portentous. The opinion began to form, especially among members of the old-fashioned aristocracy, that it was all the fault of Christianity. Disaster has come because the ancient gods have been forsaken in favour of a God hostile to the martial virtues that had served the Romans so well: a God Who enjoins meekness upon those who worship Him, and rewards the humble. Augustine tells us that it was in response to those who 'began to blaspheme against the true God more fiercely and bitterly than ever'[32] that he began in 413 to write *De civitate Dei.* He worked on it for thirteen years – with many distractions, as its structural defects show[33] – fashioning it into a critique of the whole literary, religious, political and military heritage of pagan Rome.[34] In developing this critique, Augustine's purpose is to deconstruct Rome's traditional claim, a claim that had been part of her ideological heritage for centuries, to a place of unique importance in world history.

What was the nature and basis of this claim? The Romans had always been a military people with an enthusiasm for conquest. Their culture was from the first amenable to modes of thought tending to glorify and justify feats of arms. The importation of Stoic ideas into educated Roman society added an important dimension to Rome's imperialist ideology. When they came to Rome in the latter half of the second century BCE, the Stoics Panaetius and Posidonius found themselves in an atmosphere markedly hostile to philosophical thought. In 155 BCE the Sceptic philosopher Carneades had been turned out of Rome at the insistence of Cato the Censor, who feared that his influence might undermine the martial ardour of Roman youth.[35] Whereas Greek Stoicism had been chiefly concerned with physics, logic and ethical abstractions, Panaetius and

Posidonius made a point of adapting the generalizations of Stoic ethics to the Roman predilection for the active life. In doing so, they found it easy to create from Stoic cosmopolitanism a justification of Roman imperialism. This justification was devised in intentional opposition to the opinions that had made Carneades unwelcome: that there is no such thing as natural justice, and that Roman expansion is based on mere expediency and the power of the stronger. In his continuation of the history of Polybius, Posidonius created a political myth of considerable power. He promoted the idea that Rome has world domination as her manifest destiny: domination not for her own glory, however, but in the interests of the material, moral and intellectual welfare of those dominated.[36] Dominion is the right of the better, not the stronger. Rome's historic mission is to create an empire, but an empire personifying the brotherhood of man: an empire embracing all the races of mankind in a community of peace and justice, expressed especially through the medium of a universal law.

This kind of justification – perhaps one might prefer to call it a rationalization – came especially into its own after the settlement of Augustus in 31 BCE. The Battle of Actium brought to a close the century of civil war that had begun with the assassination of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BCE. No doubt as part of the prevailing mood of optimism and relief, the Augustan settlement was accompanied by much triumphalist revision of history. The conception of the empire that we find in the literature of the Augustan period, especially in the *Aeneid* of Virgil, is revealing. It turns out that Fate or the gods had assigned to Rome from the beginning the task of bringing peace to mankind and ruling over a world-wide commonwealth. 'These are your arts,' Anchises, father of Aeneas, tells the Romans: 'to protect the vanquished and subdue the proud.'[37] The Roman people are *rerum domini*, 'lords of the world,' granted *imperium sine fine*: an 'empire without end.' When Jupiter looks out over the world from his seat on the Capitol, he can see no territory that is not under the sway of Rome.[38] By the first century of the Christian era it was easy

for the Romans to perceive their empire as the legal and administrative incarnation of the Stoic cosmopolis. By restoring the ancient virtues of the republic, Augustus had at last made the achievement of Rome's destiny possible. By the fourth century, the conviction that Rome had united the world in a coherent civilization, the empire of *Romania*, had become tightly woven into her political culture.[39] An implicit faith in the unity, reality and moral mission of *Romania* was able to endure into the fifth century despite the steady decline in the real fortunes and security of the empire.[40] Rome's empire is not a matter of hegemony or armed force. Her role in history is to transfigure the world by bringing to its peoples true and eternal principles of justice and right reason. It is probably fair to say that what made the sack of Rome so traumatic was not the damage done by Alaric's troops, but its impact upon her citizens' complacent belief in Rome as the Eternal City.

But Augustine has an alternative version of Rome's history and significance. It is a counter-history worked out in *De civitate Dei* in elaborate and merciless detail. He does not wish to deny that Rome is an important agent of world history. He thinks that God chose her from the beginning to be an instrument of His will. It is for this reason that she has enjoyed so extraordinary a degree of material success. But it is not her destiny to create an eternal civilization of justice and moral order. To the cosmopolitan ideology of *Romania* insofar as that ideology is a pagan one, Augustine's response is uncompromisingly radical. It extends even to the assertion that, considered in terms of moral authenticity, the existence of the commonwealth of Rome was only ever a kind of illusion.

Augustine's lengthy development of this point illustrates perfectly the way in which religion, morals and politics react with one another in his mind. One of the most disgraceful aspects of Rome's history, he insists, has been her devotion to wicked and worthless gods. These 'gods' are not gods. If they were, they would have taught the Romans how to live well, but they never did. Denunciation of the pagan gods is a theme that Augustine pursues in what

the reader may think tedious detail.[41] That they are contemptible demons is clear from the ways in which they wish to be worshipped. What does the true God ask of His children? Only the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart.[42] The gods of Rome demand circuses and abominable rites and lewd stage-plays. The Mother of the Gods is honoured by exhibitions in which actors say and do things that they would be ashamed for their own mothers to know about.[43] The gods betrayed those who worshipped them. Under their tutelage the Roman people underwent a moral decline so spectacular that even their own historians lament it. The extent to which the gods have deluded those who trusted in them is plain from the fact that, in truth, they are futile nonentities. Nowadays the Christians are blamed for everything that goes wrong;[44] but long before the advent of Christ Rome sustained disasters in the face of which her gods were helpless. They stood by while she suffered pestilence, military defeats, civil wars. In 390 BCE the Romans fled in disarray from the Gauls and the city was burnt. Where were the gods then? Present but asleep, perhaps?[45] Rome's persistent commitment to useless and immoral gods is, Augustine contends, enough to show that there never really was a true commonwealth of Rome. That commonwealth existed in a sense, but only in the way that a painted representation of something might exist.[46] Rome was never a *real* commonwealth, he says, because true justice was never present in her.

What does Augustine mean by 'true' justice? True justice as distinct from what? Also, given its existence as a physical fact, what, exactly, is involved in saying that the historical commonwealth of Rome was really only a representation or likeness of something else? These are questions that bear directly on our understanding of what Augustine thinks States can and cannot achieve, and we must devote careful attention to them.

Augustine's tactic in constructing his argument is to undermine the moral culture of imperial Rome by directing against it the words of one of republican Rome's most admired intellectual fig-

ures, Marcus Tullius Cicero. Augustine develops his point by way of a commentary, begun at *De civitate Dei* 2:21 and taken up again several years later at *De civitate Dei* 19:21, on Cicero's discussion of the Roman commonwealth in his dialogue *De republica*: a dialogue inspired, in style and title, by Plato's *Republic.* In the course of this discussion Cicero causes the protagonist Scipio Africanus Minor to say that a commonwealth, a *res publica*, cannot exist unless justice (*iustitia*) is present in it. We identify a commonwealth as such, Scipo observes, by the fact that a body of citizens has come together to share a corporate life in pursuit of a common interest. A *res publica* is therefore a *res populi*, a thing or property of a *populus*, a 'people'; and, inasmuch as it has come together for the sake of a shared purpose, it is clear that a 'people' has an identity: a unity that distinguishes it from a multitude or mob. What differentiates a *populus* from a mere rabble is that a *populus* is a moral entity: a community in true classical fashion. Specifically, Scipio says, it is an association constituted by its members' consensus on matters of justice or right (*ius*). From this it follows that a collection of people not constituted by a shared conception of *iustitia*, of what is *ius*, is not a *populus*, and so cannot form a commonwealth in the required sense. Hence, justice is inseparable from the definition of a commonwealth.

But in that case, Augustine retorts, Rome herself was never a commonwealth. For what is justice? According to the classical commonplace, justice is that virtue which gives to each his due. How, then, can the Roman commonwealth be just when throughout its history its citizens have been united in worshipping false and unrighteous gods by deplorable means? Withholding from the true God the worship that is owed to Him is evidently not a case of giving to each his due.[47] On this view, then, Rome never really embodied justice, and so, using Cicero's own definitions, was never a true commonwealth. Part of what this revaluation of the traditional Roman self-image implies – and is, of course, intended to imply – is that the sack of Rome was not a catastrophe after all. Everything that

the Romans have accomplished has been done 'for the sake of a merely human glory.'[48] If Rome has been sacked, that is no great loss, because Rome never offered to men anything that they could not afford to lose.

In place of Cicero's definition of a commonwealth Augustine proposes one of his own. Suppose, he says, that, instead of defining a commonwealth as the property of a people united by a consensus as to what is right, we say that it is the property of a people united by a consensus as to the objects of their love.[49] The idea of shared love, of a mutual commitment to something, as a cohesive influence is very characteristic of Augustine. We have seen already that the two Cities are constituted by two kinds of love. His identification of love as the force that creates social identity perhaps owes something to Plato's analysis, in Book 8 of the *Republic*, of constitutional deterioration in terms of changes in the values that the city's rulers adopt and transmit. The analogy that Augustine draws at one point, notwithstanding his boundless contempt for the theatre, is with the collective identity exhibited by a crowd of playgoers: 'In the theatres ... if a man loves a particular actor, he also loves those who love him too: not because of themselves, but for the sake of him whom they all admire together.'[50] You can, he says, easily discover the moral quality of any collection of people. You have only to look at what they love. It is this that makes them a *populus* rather than a mob: it is this that defines their common interest and sets the goals towards which their collective effort is directed. According to this alternative definition, the Roman commonwealth was a commonwealth of sorts, constituted by its members' devotion to false gods and earthly goods: but an unrighteous commonwealth clearly, as is every human association that derives its identity from a devotion to unworthy objects. According to the same reasoning, the only commonwealth really worthy of the name is the City of God: the eternal commonwealth of those who are formed into a *populus* by their love of the true God.

But Augustine's analysis of the Roman commonwealth has a

more general application also. His specific concern in *De civitate Dei* is with puncturing the traditional pretensions of Rome. In a certain sense, he is consoling the people of Rome by assuring them that the sack of 410 did not damage anything worth mourning. But he holds that what is true of Rome is by extension and implication true of all other States too:

> But what I say of the Roman people and commonwealth I must be understood to think and say also of the Athenians or any Greek State, of the Egyptians, of the early Assyrian Babylon, and of every other nation, great or small, that has had a public government.[51]

Why is this truth such a universal one? The answer lies in the ideas of grace and predestination. The reprobate, we remember, preponderate over the Elect at all phases of the world's history since the Fall. It is to be assumed therefore that all States – including, we must stress, States that now have a Christian government – contain a majority of persons who are not predestined to salvation. Most of the citizens of any political order will at the same time be denizens of the Earthly City rather than members of the City of God. But such people cannot in the nature of the case be just or righteous. They are not subject to the true God; they do not give Him what is due to Him. And the soul that is not subject to the true God – the soul that is not a just soul – cannot govern the body rightly; the reason cannot rule the vices.[52] A multitude containing such people therefore cannot be a *populus* in the sense that Cicero specifies. It cannot be a moral community united by a consensus as to what is right. It follows that such a multitude cannot comprise a State or commonwealth that is strictly speaking just.

In this connection, we must take account also of *De civitate Dei* 4:4. In this striking and much-discussed chapter, Augustine tells us that, 'justice being taken away,' earthly kingdoms differ from bands of robbers only with regard to size and immunity from consequences. In making this point, he again borrows an illustration from

Cicero's *De republica*:[53]

> It was a pointed and true answer that a pirate whom he had seized made to Alexander the Great. When the king asked him what he meant by infesting the sea, the pirate replied with defiance: 'The same as you do when you infest the whole world; but because I do it with a little ship I am called a robber, and because you do it with a great fleet, you are an emperor.'

The sentiment attributed to the pirate can only remind us of the 'radical' Sophists of Athens, as represented by Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* and Thrasymachus in Book 1 of the *Republic*. It reminds us also of Thucydides's report of the Athenian diplomatic mission to Melos during the Peloponnesian War.[54] Might is right; the strong take what they can, and the weak surrender what they must. Talk of 'justice' is heard only when neither side is strong enough to overpower the other: that is the nature of politics in a sentence.

It seems, then, that the only difference between an emperor and a pirate is that the emperor is in a position consistently to get away with what he does. Indeed, Augustine appears to think it a serious possibility that a State might actually grow out of a criminal gang:

> What are bands of robbers ... but little kingdoms? If, by the constant addition of desperate men, this scourge grows to such a size that it acquires territory, establishes a seat of government, occupies cities and subjugates peoples, it assumes the name of kingdom more openly. For this name is now manifestly conferred upon it not by the removal of greed, but by the addition of impunity.

In view of observations of this kind, is it Augustine's belief that the political institutions of this world simply do not embody anything of the kind that classical philosophy had called justice? If we take *De civitate Dei* 4:4 in conjunction with *De civitate Dei* 19:21, and if we read both in the light of Augustine's general principles that States originate in the lust for mastery and that the majority of individuals in every human association is reprobate, it certainly looks

as though he thinks that the idea of justice has nothing to contribute to our understanding of politics. He seems to be suggesting that the justice to which States lay claim is only a polite disguise for organized robbery.

But this is not quite what he means. It must be conceded that his various remarks about political justice are not entirely consistent; nor are they without ambiguity. Looking at the matter broadly, however, it is possible to infer from them a largely coherent position that may be summarized as follows. No earthly State is, or possibly could be, just in the fullest or most proper sense of the term. No State embodies an undisturbed and perfect harmony grounded in the love and worship of God, which is what 'true' justice, *vera iustitia*, is.[55] But States – even pagan States – can be *bene ordinata*, 'well ordered,' or *bene constituta*, 'well constituted.' They can be organized in such a way as to make possible for their citizens a relatively safe and orderly existence in a world made dangerous by sin.[56] What we see in such States is certainly not *vera iustitia*, but it is *iustitia* of a kind. It is a semblance or an approximation that we may call earthly or temporal or human justice. Such temporal justice is approximate not only because it is never fully achieved, but also because its aims are confined to this world and to the manipulation of outward behaviour. It consists in maintaining as far as possible a secure and orderly environment for men to conduct the external aspects of life in. The point – the distinction between earthly justice and true justice – is clearly a Platonist one. Perfect justice, ideal justice, is laid up in heaven. It is to be found only 'in that commonwealth whose Founder and Ruler is Christ':[57] that is, only in the City of God, the eternal commonwealth of the Elect, united and transfigured by love of God. It is not that, when measured against true justice, earthly justice is false justice or not justice at all. It is, however, incomplete or imperfect justice. It is an image of *vera iustitia*: a likeness in the way that a picture of something is a likeness of the thing that it represents, but cannot be the thing itself.

Justice in this limited or analogical sense is undeniably present in

this world, and is undeniably a kind of good. As such, we are to regard it a gift from God. Undeniable also is the fact that earthly justice was brought to a high degree of realization through the achievements of Rome. The Romans of old contrived by their efforts to 'preserve a certain characteristic rectitude, sufficient to found, increase and maintain an earthly city.' In this way, 'God showed ... how much can be achieved by civic virtues without true religion.' But He did this only to teach us 'how, with the addition of [true religion,] men may become citizens of another commonwealth, whose King is truth, whose law is love, and whose duration is eternity.'[58] In true Platonist fashion, Augustine believes that the real purpose of the images that we see in this world is to show the receptive soul what lies beyond them. The role in history that God has assigned to Rome is the achievement of earthly justice only. In this 'more feasible' sense she was, according to Cicero's definition, indeed a commonwealth *of a kind*.[59] But even the best earthly justice – granted that there is such a thing, and that the kings of the earth are not just the most successful of the world's current crop of bandits – is only a copy of the real thing. Thanks to the additional factors of sin and grace, it is far less like the real thing for Augustine than it had been for Plato. For Augustine, philosophers cannot be saviours. Moreover, Augustine considers that even earthly or temporal justice is not *essential* to the State. It is not, as Cicero had supposed, part of the definition of the State. Tyrants hold in contempt the principles of even earthly justice; but tyrannies are valid and authoritative political orders nonetheless, and we must regard ourselves as bound to obey them in all but the single limiting case that we shall consider in the final section of this chapter.

The Augustinian dictum that there can be no true justice except in 'that commonwealth whose Founder and Ruler is Christ' is one that medieval political controversialists cited with approval. They did so because they wanted to attribute to Augustine a particular meaning: namely, that justice can be present in a State only insofar as its government is subject to spiritual supervision. This interpreta-

tion was adopted for the sake of an argument about which we shall have something to say in Chapter 5. It supported the doctrine that the only just rule is that of the Christian prince who acknowledges himself to hold his power at the Church's pleasure. But, attractive as this interpretation is from a certain point of view, it is decidedly not what Augustine means. It is important to be clear that, to his mind, even pagan States can achieve earthly justice, but *true* justice cannot find expression *anywhere* on earth. It cannot find expression in any State, Christian or otherwise; nor can it find expression in the earthly Church. We have seen already that it cannot find expression in the State, and why it cannot. But it cannot find expression in the Church either, because, as we have also seen, the Church too contains both Elect and reprobate. The earthly Church is therefore no more a true 'commonwealth,' a true *res publica*, than the secular State is. The mere submission of temporal rulers to the will of the Church cannot suffice to make the State a moral community of the classical kind.

So much, then, for the character of earthly justice. As we shall see in due course, Augustine believes that Christian rulers can achieve a better or less approximate version of justice than pagan ones can. But the function of both pagan and Christian States is to govern the life of a multitude that is not a moral community, not a *populus*, because many – probably the great majority – of its members are not true lovers of God. In all actually existing States, even those presided over by sincere and diligent Christians, the saved and the lost are thrown together without visible distinction. No earthly State, therefore, no matter how 'just' it may be in the sense of effectively controlling its citizens' public behaviour, can be truly or fully just. It can never be a commonwealth in a sense that is not imperfect or inexact. There can be true justice only among those who belong not to this State or that, nor to the merely institutional Church, but to the City of God conceived as the whole community of grace: to the Divine and eternal cosmopolis. Justice will not be realized in its complete and authentic form until after this world

ends, when that City's pilgrim contingent, delivered from all impure associations, enters into its eternal communion with God.

(c) The State as a Means of Control and Discipline

We pass now to the second of Augustine's perspectives on the State: a perspective that has already begun to emerge from what we have said in the previous section. The State is a consequence of sin and an expression of sin, but States are nonetheless capable of achieving a qualified kind of justice. To this extent, they are also the agencies by which the external and material effects of sin are ameliorated.[60] Earthly justice is faulty and incomplete, but justice faulty and incomplete is better than no justice at all.

It is easy to see why this is so. We have only to reflect on what life would be like if the order that government creates were subtracted from the earth. The world is full of egoists dominated by self-love and motivated by greedy desires to which there is no limit.[61] The number of people of whom this is not true is very small, and even the righteous are prone to temptation and lapse. In our present condition, 'not everyone, and perhaps no one, completely attains what he desires ... and so mankind everywhere is generally divided against itself, and when one part is the stronger, it oppresses another.'[62] If government were absent, life on earth would, as Professor Deane points out, be a Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes*: a war of everyone against everyone.[63] Even in a governed world, mankind is capable of greater enormities than the beasts are, and everyone has to be on his guard. 'You rob others; you guard against the robber: you are afraid in case you suffer the wrong that you yourself do, and even when you suffer it it does not correct you.'[64] It is clear that, without some restraining force, the human race would disappear in a welter of lust-driven self-destruction.

Inasmuch as it is able to maintain a degree of order and security, therefore, coercive government has a positive contribution to make to human life. The existence of such government is inconsistent with

God's creative intention, but He permits it to remain in being nonetheless, as a means of imposing limits on mankind's inimical tendencies.

> Who, indeed, is so blind in mind that he does not see ... how great is the value of the order of the commonwealth, which coerces even sinners into the bond of its earthly peace?[65]
>
> For as long as [men] fear to lose ... earthly goods, they observe in using them a kind of restraint appropriate to the unity of such a city as is capable of being constituted by such men.[66]
>
> It is ... not without advantage that human effrontery should be coerced by the fear of the law, so that innocence may be safe among evildoers and the evildoers themselves may be healed by calling upon God when their freedom to do as they like is curtailed by fear of punishment.[67]

The reference in the third of these passages is to a feature of Augustine's thought that we shall come to in Chapter 5: the efficacy of religious persecution by the Christian State. But even pagan States have a part to play in creating the conditions without which life would be impossible for all save the efficient predator. Government restores a semblance of justice to a world made perilous by the characteristics that sin has brought to the fore. In this way, it brings relief to Christians and unbelievers alike. While the two Cities are mingled together on earth, the Elect also benefit from the resources and advantages of this life, such as they are.[68]

It is often said that Augustine depicts earthly government as a 'remedy' for sin, or that the commonwealth is in his view a 'remedial community.'[69] There is no need to quibble about such expressions insofar as they are used as a kind of shorthand. It is, however, necessary to be clear as to their limitations. For Augustine, the State and its laws and instrumentalities are 'remedial' only in a temporal and restricted sense. There is only one true and perfect remedy for sin. That remedy is the grace of God mediated to the world through Christ. The State is an external order only. Augustine does not share the Aristotelian belief that legislators can contribute to our moral

formation by inculcating good habits in us.[70] Human law cannot make us good; for the most part, it can create only the conditions that make it possible for us to sin in safety. The State coerces us into observing its laws by threatening us with unpleasant consequences if we break them. But 'no one is good through fear of punishment; only through love of righteousness.'[71] Temporal government exists to secure outward conformity to those standards of behaviour that make life tolerable, but it can do no more than this.

> What … does the temporal law bid us do? Does it have any purpose other than that men should possess those things that can be called 'ours' for the time being, and to which they cling so greedily, in such a way that peace and human society may be preserved insofar as they can be preserved in such matters?[72]

Christian States have the further and incidental advantage of providing the kind of order that facilitates the work of the Church. But the State as such, even the Christian State, has no bearing whatsoever on our inner lives. It can only reduce the immediate and external harm that arises from the predatory behaviour of the unrighteous. To this extent, it reflects once again the mercy of God in not forsaking His fallen creation.

But, third, the State is not only an institutionalization of sin and a 'remedial' order in the sense that we have outlined. It is also one of the disciplines that God has imposed upon the human race. Temporal government is disciplinary in a twofold sense. It exists to punish the wicked; it is a kind of down-payment on their eternal punishment.[73] It is also a kind of large-scale *ordo poenitentiae*, the purpose of which is to try the faith and perseverance of the righteous. Under which of these two aspects we relate to government – how we respond to such discipline – will depend on what kind of people we are:

> For as the same fire causes gold to glow brightly and chaff to smoke, and under the same flail the chaff is beaten small while the grain is purified;

> and as the lees are not mixed with the oil though squeezed out of the vat by the same pressure: so the same violence of affliction proves, purges and clarifies the good, but damns, ruins and exterminates the wicked.[74]

In this connection, Augustine states a principle that was to become part of the stock in trade of medieval political thought. He insists that *all* political power comes from God, regardless of whether the rulers upon whom it has been bestowed are good or bad. The sentiment reflects the teaching of St Paul at Romans 13:1: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.'[75] On the one hand (and see p. 78), Augustine believes that no law can be just even in his restricted sense of 'just' unless it reflects the 'eternal law.' He seems by this expression to mean both the Law of God as revealed in the Scriptures and the rationally obvious principles of the law of nature. On the other hand, unlike Cicero, he does not make justice or righteousness a definiendum of the State. He insists that the powers that be are ordained of God even if they are tyrants. They hold their power rightly even though they do not use it rightly: the gentle Vespasii were Divinely appointed, but so was the wicked Nero.[76] Why does God give power even to those whom He knows will use it ill? Because wicked rulers are to be counted among the instruments of Divine punishment and trial.

> For it is not unjust that the wicked should receive the power of doing harm so that the patience of the good may be tested and the iniquity of the evil punished.[77]

If we find ourselves in the clutches of a tyrant, this is no more than our condition as sinners deserves. If we are righteous, earthly adversity serves to refine us and make us worthier of a supernatural reward.

But it is not only tyrants who are appointed to discipline us. Government is harsh and punitive even under the most clement and well-intentioned ruler. The law 'coerces by means of fear ... and

shapes and reshapes to its own will the minds of the unhappy people to rule whom it is adapted.'[78] Often the law is punitive in ways that seem unfair. The penalties inflicted by judges do not always match the deserts of those who suffer them. Sometimes the innocent are condemned and the guilty escape. The most scrupulous of judges, because they cannot know what is in men's hearts, must have recourse to torture to get at the truth.[79] Even the non-tyrannical State is, for Augustine, typified by its most fearsome officials and its most terrible acts:

> Surely it is not in vain that we have the institution of the power of kings; the judge's right to inflict the penalty of death; ... the hooks of the executioner; the weapons of the soldier ... All these things have their methods, their causes, their reasons, their uses. For as long as these things are feared, the wicked are coerced and the good live more peacefully in the midst of the wicked.[80]

In the same vein, he asks:

> What is more terrible than the hangman? What is more cruel and ferocious than his mind? Yet he occupies a necessary place among the laws themselves, and he is inserted into the order of the well-governed city. He himself is disposed in his mind to do harm; yet, by the appointment of another, he is the penalty of evildoers.[81]

Not only is the State artificial rather than natural; it is also, and necessarily, a grim and frightening presence. Political orders secure their purposes not, as they do for Plato and Aristotle, through reason and the promotion of willing co-operation, but through force and the threat of force. The selfish impulses of fallen man are so powerful that he can be restrained from them only by drastic and terrifying means. The typical devices of government are ferocious largely because it is only through violence and the fear of it that human destructiveness can be controlled. But God causes all things to work together for good.[82] The Divine economy has also made government into an instrument of chastisement and purification.

(d) Obligation

Earthly government, in short, is fundamentally negative and external in character. At worst, it is the means by which individuals whom God meant to be equal exploit and dominate one another. At best, it is necessary only because man is fallen. It achieves even such beneficial effects as it has by manipulating squalid emotions: fear, greed, pride. So understood, can political orders possess any moral dimension at all? Is there any sense in which men – and especially Christians, whose allegiance is not to the things of this world – can be said to 'owe' obedience to the State? Augustine believes that there is; he has a very strict doctrine of obligation. It should be understood, however, that this doctrine is not a theory of 'political obligation' as that expression is usually understood.

How we view the question of obligation depends on the distinction between the Elect and the reprobate. On the one hand, Augustine believes that the relationship that the latter have with the State is to be conceived simply in terms of self-love. It is true that individuals can always fool themselves into believing that they are acting out of duty. But when the unredeemed honour the laws and customs of their State they are not actuated by what Augustine thinks is a genuine – a selfless – sense of obligation. They do so either out of fear of what would happen to them otherwise, or because they hanker after the rewards that come to those who serve their fatherland well. Pagan Rome's most distinguished sons made sacrifices, but not true sacrifices. Their sacrifices were an investment on which they desired a return. Augustine is fair-minded enough to grant that they did not want mere lucre; but he knows from the testimony of history how passionately they craved the kind of immortality that is not real immortality. They longed above all for *gloria* – renown, deathless fame – and they received it: 'they have no reason to complain of the justice of the highest and true God.'[83] Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the tie that binds most people to the commonwealth is prudential or self-interested or both, and

Augustine has no more to say about it than that.

Christians, on the other hand, must acknowledge a genuine obligation to obey the government and uphold the institutions of society. This obligation is not political, however, but religious. It does not depend upon, nor does it express, a moral relationship subsisting as between governor and governed. The Christian occupies a moral and spiritual world to which earthly institutions are irrelevant. 'Those who cling to the eternal law with a good will do not need the temporal law,' Augustine says, whereas 'upon unhappy men the temporal law is imposed.'[84] In terms of his interior life, the temporal law has no reference to the Christian. Insofar as what the law of the State enjoins is good, the righteous man will do it without needing to be compelled. But it is nonetheless the Christian's duty to submit to government outwardly. He must do so not because government as such has any claim on him, but because it is God's will that he should be subject to the higher powers even if those powers are cruel and wicked.

> Although we are called to that kingdom in which there will be no [temporal] power ... nonetheless, while we are here in the midst of our pilgrimage, and until we arrive at that age when every principality and power shall pass away,[85] let us endure our condition for the sake of maintaining that very order of human affairs, doing nothing falsely,[86] and by that fact in itself obeying not so much men as the God Who has commanded us.[87]

Augustine's view of how Christians should conduct themselves in relation to the State is highly conservative. As a Platonist, he loves order. He is moreover aware of how fragile this world's order is, and by temperament fearful of disorder and its consequences. Though unrighteous in its origin and in so many of its objectives, the State has been turned by God to good use.[88] It is inextricably bound up with sin; the conditions of life to which it subjects us are to be suffered rather than enjoyed: but its existence and operation are in accordance with the Divine plan. God in His mercy uses evil to bring forth good. He allows earthly rulers to have power over

others, and in this way He uses defective institutions to produce enough 'justice' to make life endurable. The Christian must recognize this aspect of God's plan and faithfully conform himself to it, and he must do so even if the ruler under whom he finds himself is tyrannical and ungodly. No earthly ruler has reason to complain about the standards of citizenship that the Christian religion enjoins. Far from it:

> Let those who say that the doctrine of Christ is inimical to the welfare of the commonwealth ... give us an army composed of such men as the doctrine of Christ commands soldiers to be. Let them give us such subjects, such husbands, such wives, such parents, such children, such masters, such servants, such kings, such judges, indeed even such taxpayers and tax gatherers as the Christian religion has taught that men should be, and then let them dare to say that it is inimical to the welfare of the commonwealth.[89]

Inasmuch as the model Christian is also the model citizen, the kings of the earth have suspected and persecuted the Christians without cause.[90] But what makes the Christian a model citizen is his sense of obligation not to the kings of the earth, but to the God Who has empowered those kings.

As one might expect, there is a limiting case. Although we are in normal circumstances obliged to obey the State as a matter of religious duty, we have an equally binding obligation, and an obligation of the same kind, to *dis*obey it if its exactions run counter to what God requires of us. Even here, however, we must be clear as to just how conservative and precise Augustine's 'theory' of disobedience is. His remarks hark back to the days before the conversion of Constantine. During the years of persecution, Christians were from time to time required by the authorities to perform an act of submission to the State religion (see p. 160). Those who did so would be an issued with a certificate, a *libellus*, exempting them from further persecution. Typically, the test might involve offering incense before a statue of Jupiter or participating in a rite of sacri-

fice. Inasmuch as such acts violated the first two Commandments, they could only be construed as a betrayal of the faith.[91] If those in whose power we are were to require us to do something of this kind, how should we respond? The question had become largely academic by Augustine's day,[92] but, as to the principle, he counsels what, and only what, we should now call civil disobedience or passive resistance. In such a plight, we should with confidence emulate the *pia libertas* of the martyrs: the pious freedom with which the martyrs had refused to sacrifice.[93] What do the conditions of this life matter after all, provided that we are not induced to turn aside from our faith? The pain of death is far surpassed by the reward that awaits the righteous.[94] The emperor can kill us; so can a poisonous mushroom, though: the emperor has no more power over us than a mushroom has.[95] If we are commanded to do something in defiance of the known will of God, we should decline to comply; but we should do so politely and with an explanation, and take the consequences willingly. No matter how wicked or oppressive the ruler or his acts, rebellion, active resistance or even disrespectful defiance cannot be justified. Augustine's terminology is unequivocal. Where religious duty is at stake, we may courteously refuse: we may disregard commands that are in this sense unlawful;[96] but never does he suggest that we may or should do more, and in no other case may we do even that.

This account of Augustine's theory of obligation illustrates the fact that, although he subscribes with reservations to the doctrine of natural law, he is a thorough positivist in his understanding of human law. Human law derives its binding force not from its content – not from its conformity to the principles of nature or right reason – but from the fact that it is the command of the sovereign whom God has set over us, regardless of whether that sovereign is good or bad. It is important to emphasize this point because Augustine has in the past been seriously misunderstood with respect to it. The misunderstanding arises especially in relation to the following statement from the dialogue *De libero arbitrio*:

> There is nothing just or proper in the temporal law that men have not derived [apart from what men have derived] from the eternal law. For if a people ... has conferred honours justly at one time and unjustly at another, the difference in each case pertains to the temporal sphere, but the judgement as to justice and injustice is derived from the eternal sphere, where it is abidingly just that a responsible people should confer honours and a fickle people should not ... To put into words as briefly as I can the idea of the eternal law as being impressed upon our minds, I should say this: that it is just for all things to be perfectly in order.[97]

As we noted earlier (see p. 72), we can take the phrase 'eternal law' here as being partly co-extensive with what Augustine elsewhere calls the law of nature. His tendency, typical of the Latin Fathers, is to use the expressions 'natural law,' 'eternal law' and 'Divine law' more or less interchangeably. Such variation of expression is by no means unusual before the thirteenth century, and for our purposes it is not important.[98] What is important is that, on the strength of this paragraph, an extraordinary doctrine has been attributed to Augustine: that a law not in conformity with the eternal law 'n'est plus qu'une formule inerte et vide, incapable de dicter un devoir et de commander l'obéissance.' The same author suggests that, according to Augustine, 'une loi injuste n'est pas une loi et ... le citoyen doit lui refuser l'obéissance.'[99] But this interpretation entirely ignores Augustine's unequivocal statements to the contrary. Nor is it necessary to respond to the passage from *De libero arbitrio* by suggesting that the dialogue is an early production (388) that does not express Augustine's settled opinion. What he means is that there is a difference between good laws and bad laws and that it is the 'eternal' law that enables us to recognize the difference. What he does *not* mean, and what he nowhere says, is that bad laws are not laws and that citizens can rightly refuse, or must refuse, to obey them.[100] With the single exception that we have mentioned, his position is that we are rightfully subject even to the laws of tyrants.

It may be that the misunderstanding here has arisen from Augustine's own language: *In illa tempore,* he says, *nihil esse iustum*

et legitimum quod non ex hac aeterna sibi homines derivaverint. We have intentionally rendered *legitimum* in this sentence as 'proper,' which is a perfectly correct translation. But the word that will no doubt occur most readily to the French or English reader is 'legitime' or 'legitimate.' In that case, since it is impossible, given the normal meaning of those words, for us to conceive of an illegitimate law, it seems to follow that Augustine is asserting that laws not in conformity with the 'eternal law' are not laws. We must stress, however, that this is not what he means. To his mind, we can distinguish good laws from bad ones and good rulers from tyrants, and it is through our rational apprehension of a higher law, a natural or 'eternal' law, that we are able to do so. But the subject's recognition that bad laws are bad does not release him from the obligation that he has in nearly all cases to obey them. The laws of this world bind us because they are commanded by this world's rulers. They do not depend for their validity upon their moral content. To suppose otherwise is to misconceive fundamentally Augustine's view as to the character and purposes of law and government.[101]

As to the question of Christian obligation, then, Augustine acknowledges the distinction between political and tyrannical rule that Plato and Aristotle had acknowledged, but he attributes to it no general significance in terms of its bearing on our obligation as subjects. It has no such significance because our obligation as subjects does not depend upon any earthly consideration. Bad laws are laws nonetheless. The power that rulers have comes to them from above. It descends from God.[102] It does not proceed upwards from their subjects, and no one may prescribe or limit the use of a power that he has not conferred. Christians may not regard themselves as entitled to question the ruler whom God has appointed, even if that ruler is a despot. Augustine is always clear in his insistence that tyrannical government is not an infliction that we are entitled to resent. It is an instrument ordained of God to punish the wicked and test the righteous. If the emperor harms or persecutes us, he does not on that account cease to be our rightful ruler.

Justice and injustice therefore have no bearing on the legitimacy of government. Even in the most trying circumstances, our willing support is due to 'the customs, laws and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained.'[103] If the emperor commands us to worship false gods, we must decline to obey: not, however, because we do not acknowledge his authority or because his authority has ceased or is suspended, but because both he and we are bound to defer to an authority higher than his.

> Consider, now, those who are above you ... Let them enjoin nothing that contradicts anyone who is above themselves, and let them be obeyed ... So, then, if the emperor commands one thing and God another, what do you think? Pay me tribute; submit yourself to me in obedience. Right. Not in the temple of an idol, though: He forbids it in the temple of an idol. Who forbids it? A greater power. Excuse me, then: you threaten prison; He threatens hell.[104]
>
> Julian[105] was an unbelieving emperor: an apostate, a wicked man, a worshipper of idols. In the service of the unbelieving emperor were soldiers who were Christians. When they came to the cause of Christ, they acknowledged Him alone Who is in heaven. If at any time the emperor said to them, 'Worship idols,' or 'Offer incense,' they put God before him. Nevertheless, whenever he said to them, 'Form a line of battle,' or 'March against this people or that,' they immediately obeyed. They saw the difference between their eternal Lord and their temporal lord; yet, out of regard for their eternal Lord, they were obedient to their temporal lord also.[106]

The question of military service by Christian soldiers raises difficulties of its own, at which we shall look in the final section of Chapter 4. For the time being, suffice it to say that, in asserting that good men may and should obey bad masters, Augustine again divests political relationships of the moral significance that classical authors had assigned to them. The conduct of the good citizen is defined in terms lying outside the categories of merely human loyalties. 'They saw the difference between their eternal Lord and their temporal lord; yet, out of regard for their eternal Lord, they were obedient to

their temporal lord also.' The Christian's conduct in both giving and withholding obedience is directed by no other principle than his allegiance to God. Both obedience and refusal arise out of an obligation that is not political, but religious.

* * * * *

The State, then, is an outcome of sin. It is founded upon sin and associated with sin. It was inaugurated by individuals driven by rivalry, envy and greed. It originates in the self-loving urge to dominate. It expresses the impulses of aggression and acquisition that are inseparable from our fallen nature. God did not intend that coercive government should arise. He permits it to continue, however, because it serves the purposes of control and discipline and, to that extent, provides the world with what, though only loosely speaking, we may call justice. But there is nothing exalted about politics. The claim of Rome, or of any other State, to enact more than an approximate and instrumental kind of justice is false. Augustine concedes that Rome has shown great effectiveness in policing and restraining human behaviour, and that she has in this sense contrived to secure justice of a kind. To that extent, she has served a Divine purpose. But the earthly State is not a moral community. It is not, and cannot be, a *polis* of the kind made familiar to us by Plato and Aristotle, nor is the Roman Empire a cosmopolis in the Stoic sense. True justice can prevail only among those united by commitment to the true God: which is the same as saying that true justice cannot be present in any earthly association at all.

Notes

1. We here use the term 'State' in a general sense, to denote the governed community and the mechanisms by which it regulated. No doubt the purist would be right to point out that the word is an anachronism in this context. We adopt it only as an inoffensive way of avoiding verbal clumsiness. The numerous definitional problems that it attracts need not detain us.

2. For various perspectives on Augustine's theory of the 'State' and related matters see: P.D. Bathory, *Political Theory as Public Confession: The Social and Political Thought of St Augustine of Hippo* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1981); H.A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine*; J.B. Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999); J.N. Figgis, *The Political Aspects of Saint Augustine's 'City of God'* (London: Longmans, 1921); R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*; E. TeSelle, *Living in Two Cities: Augustinian Trajectories in Political Thought* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1998). Of interest also are N.H. Baynes, *The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's 'De civitate Dei'* (London: Historical Association, 1936); W.E. Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality* (London: Sage, 1993); E.L. Fortin, 'Augustine's City of God and the Modern Historical Consciousness,' *Review of Politics* 41 (1979); G.J. Lavere, 'The Political Realism of Saint Augustine,' *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980); 'The Influence of Saint Augustine on Early Medieval Political Theory,' *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981); R. Martin, 'The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33 (1972); T.E. Mommsen, 'St Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of the City of God,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951). See also P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971).
3. *De civitate Dei* 19:12.
4. Genesis 2:21–22.
5. *De bono coniugali* 1; cf. *De civitate Dei* 12:22–23; 14:1.
6. *Epistulae* 130:6:13.
7. *Discourses* 1:13:4; and cf. Cicero, *De legibus* 1:10:29: 'Nothing so exactly resembles anything else as we ourselves resemble each other.' On the Stoic theory of natural equality, and in particular the important idea of *oikeiosis*, see especially Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 4.
8. See, e.g., *Enarrationes in psalmos* 57:1; *In Ioannis evangelium* 49:12; *De Trinitate* 14:15:21.
9. Genesis 3:16.
10. Aristotle, *Politics* 1253ᵃ25.
11. See Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 3.
12. Genesis 1:28.
13. *De civitate Dei* 19:15; cf. *In Ioannis epistulam* 8:6.

14. See *In Ioannis epistulam* 8:6–8: 'We read, therefore ... how man was made in the image and likeness of God. And what did God say of him? "Let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Did He say, Let him have power over men? "Have power," He said: He gave him a natural power. Over what should he have power? Over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heaven, and over all cattle that move upon the earth. Why is this ... a natural power? Because man has power from this fact: that he was made in the image of God. And in what respect was he made in the image of God? In the intellect, in the soul, in the inner man: inasmuch as he understands truth, can tell right from wrong, knows by Whom he was made, is able to understand his Creator, to praise his Creator. He who has prudence has this intelligence. Therefore when many men by evil lusts blurred the outlines of God's image in themselves, and by the perversity of their morals extinguished the very flame, as it were, of intelligence, the Scripture cried aloud to them, saying: "Become not ye as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding" [Psalm 32:19] ... But because, by sin, man deserted Him to Whom he should be subject, he has ... exceeded his proper measure. In his greed, he who was made to be over the beasts wishes to be over other men also.'
15. Diogenes Laertius 7:87–88.
16. *De civitate Dei* 12:23.
17. Genesis 4:14–17.
18. *De civitate Dei* 15:5.
19. *De civitate Dei* 15:17.
20. *De civitate Dei* 15:5.
21. Ibid.
22. *De civitate Dei* 15:1–8.
23. *De doctrina Christiana* 1:23.
24. *De civitate Dei* 19:12.
25. *Enarrationes in psalmos.* 100:4.
26. See, e.g., *De civitate Dei* 15:4; 18:2.
27. *De civitate Dei* 5:18.
28. *De civitate Dei* 5:13; 16.
29. See, e.g., *De civitate Dei* 2:2–18; 21; 5:13; 16; 18; 19:21–24.
30. See Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, ch. 9.

31. The Altar of Victory had been removed once before, by Constantius, in 357, but reinstated in 361 by Julian 'the Apostate' (see n. 105). Attempts were made to restore it after 383 by Eugenius and possibly by Stilicho. For the debate over the Altar of Victory between St Ambrose and the Prefect Symmachus see St Ambrose, *Epistulae* 17, 18 and 57:6; cf. Paulinus, *Vita Sancti Ambrosii* 26; R.H. Barrow (ed.), *Prefect and Emperor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). See also B. Croke and J. Harries, *Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Rome* (London: Eurospan, 1982); S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*; F. Homes Dudden, *The Life and Times of St Ambrose* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935); A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*.
32. *Retractationes* 2:43:2.
33. 'Even Augustine thought it a bit too long; and we tend to dismiss it, as Henry James dismissed the Russian novels of the last century, as a "loose, baggy monster"' (P.R.L. Brown, 'Saint Augustine,' in B. Smalley (ed.) *Trends in Medieval Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), p. 1).
34. *De civitate Dei* was published in fascicules between 413 and 426. Augustine tells us, at 5:26, that someone was preparing a reply to the first three books; but no such reply has survived, if it was ever written.
35. See Plutarch, *Cato Maior* 22–23: 'As soon as the passion for philosophy first showed itself in Rome, Cato was much displeased. He feared that young people might allow their ambitions to be diverted in this direction, and might come to desire above all a reputation based upon feats of oratory rather than feats of arms ... Cato did not [insist on the expulsion of Carneades] out of personal dislike ... as some thought, but because he was opposed to philosophy on principle. His patriotic fervour made him despise the whole of Greek culture and its methods of education.' For some account of Carneades see Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 5:15; 17–18. See also Cicero, *De finibus* 5:16.
36. See especially M. van Straaten, *Panétius: sa vie, ses écrits et sa doctrine* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1946); M. Laffranque, *Poseidonios d'Apamée* (Paris: PUF, 1964); L. Edelstein, 'The Philosophical System of Posidonius,' *American Journal of Philology* 57 (1936). See also E.V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*.
37. *Aeneid*, 6:853.
38. *Aeneid* 1:278–279; 4:229; 6:794–795; Ovid, *Fasti* 1:85–86. For an outline of Rome's conception of herself and its history see H. Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: Macmillan, 1972), ch. 3.

39. 'For Tacitus or for Ammianus Marcellinus, Rome has become the eternal city. Events no longer follow each other to form a coherent and purposeful development ... The empire stands fast, as indestructible as the heavens above and the earth below.' Tudor, *Political Myth*, pp. 89–90.
40. See especially Donald Earl, *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967); see also Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*; L.S. Mazzolani, *The Idea of the City in Roman Thought: From Walled City to Spiritual Commonwealth* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1970).
41. See *De civitate Dei* 1–10 passim.
42. Psalm 51:17.
43. *De civitate Dei* 2:4.
44. *De civitate Dei* 2:3; cf. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 80:1; Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 40.
45. *De civitate Dei* 2:22.
46. *De civitate Dei* 2:21.
47. Donald Earl is, of course, right to observe that Augustine's argument involves an equivocation as to the meaning of *iustitia* that is 'wholly illicit from the point of view of strict argumentation' (*The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome*, p. 127). Augustine habitually uses the word *iustitia* to mean either justice in the technical sense or general 'righteousness' or both.
48. *De civitate Dei* 5:16.
49. *De civitate Dei* 19:24.
50. *De doctrina Christiana* 1:30.
51. *De civitate Dei* 19:24.
52. Cf Plato, *Republic* 434D–449A.
53. 3:14:24.
54. See Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 1.
55. *De civitate Dei* 19:23.
56. *De civitate Dei* 17:14; *De vera religione* 26:48.
57. *De civitate Dei* 19:23.
58. *Epistulae* 138:3:17.
59. *De civitate Dei* 2:21.
60. See *De Genesi ad litteram* 9:9; *Epistulae* 153:6:16; *De libero arbitrio* 1:15:32–33; *Sermo* 125:5; *De ordine* 2:4:12.
61. Cf. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 39:7.
62. *De civitate Dei* 18:2.
63. *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine*, p. 46.

64. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 38:11.
65. *De Genesi ad litteram* 9:9.
66. *De libero arbitrio* 1:15:32; cf. 1:5:13:40–41.
67. *Epistulae* 153:6:16.
68. *De civitate Dei* 18:54.
69. See R.W. and A.J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West* vol. 1, p. 130; Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine*, p. 78.
70. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103^{b}5; *Politics* 1253^{a}30.
71. *Epistulae* 153:6:16.
72. *De libero arbitrio* 1:15:32.
73. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 37:23.
74. *De civitate Dei* 1:8.
75. And cf. I Peter 2:17–18. In the form of the Divine Right doctrine, this idea of divine ordination was, of course, to play a part in European political theory down to the seventeenth century.
76. *De civitate Dei* 5:21; *De natura boni* 32.
77. *De natura boni* 32.
78. *De libero arbitrio* 1:15:32.
79. *De civitate Dei* 19:6; 20:2; *Epistulae* 95:3.
80. *Epistulae* 153:6:16.
81. *De ordine* 2:4:12.
82. Romans 8:28.
83. *De civitate Dei* 5:15.
84. *De libero arbitrio* 1:15:31.
85. Cf. I Corinthians 15:24.
86. Cf. II Corinthians 4:2.
87. *Expositio quarumdam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos* 72.
88. *Sermo* 125:5.
89. *Epistulae* 138:2:10.
90. *Enarrationes in psalmos.* 118[31]:1.
91. For an illustration of this practice from the persecution of 249–251 under the emperor Decius, see H. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 13.
92. But not, perhaps, entirely academic. Paganism was by no means extinct, and the toleration granted by Constantine had already been been revoked once, by the emperor Julian. No one could guarantee that another unrighteous

emperor would not arise, by conquest or otherwise. The Visigoths who sacked Rome in 410, though Christians, were heretics. Also, the heretical and schismatic Donatist Church of North Africa was influential, popular and violent; the Donatists had been supported by Julian 'the Apostate.' Augustine's advice to the orthodox as to how to conduct themselves if their faith were threatened by the authorities was perhaps not as irrelevant as one might at first sight suppose.

93. *Sermo* 326:2; *Contra litteras Petiliani* 2:92:211.
94. *Sermo* 62:10:15; cf. *De civitate Dei* 5:17.
95. *Sermo* 62:10:15.
96. *Sermo* 62:5:8–10:15; *Enarrationes in psalmos.* 124:7; *Epistulae* 185:2:8.
97. *De libero arbitrio* 1:6:15:50–51.
98. It is, however, important for other purposes, particularly in relation to the development of the natural law doctrine in the context of medieval canon law. See Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 6.
99. G. Combès, *La doctrine politique de saint Augustin* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1927), pp. 152, 416. This rather ancient source continues to be worthy of notice because its mistaken view still receives support. Cf. D.G. Tannenbaum and D. Schultz, *Inventors of Ideas: An Introduction to Western Political Philosophy* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), p. 79 (italics mine): '[B]y defining what a true republic is, Augustine provides a standard of justice by which human law and institutions can be measured. *Laws that fail to conform to the higher standards of justice are not real laws.*' On this subject see also Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine*, pp. 90–91.
100. At *De libero arbitrio* 1:5:11:33 he does indeed say: 'it seems to me that a law that is unjust is not a law'; but this is only to allow himself to be contradicted at once by the protagonist Evodius, who makes the 'Augustinian' point that even bad laws are good insofar as they prevent worse things from happening.
101. See also the following passage from Augustine's treatise *De vera religione* (31:58), written in about 390:

> In the case of temporal laws, men make judgements about them when they enact them, but after they have been enacted and confirmed it is not lawful for a judge to pass judgement on them, but only in accordance with them. So also the framer of temporal laws, if he is a good and wise man, takes into account that eternal law itself upon which no soul is permitted to pass judgement, so that he may decide what is to be commanded and forbidden for the time being

> according to immutable rules. Pure souls may, therefore, know what the eternal law is, but they may not pass judgement on it.

Here again, the statement is that the framer of temporal laws will take the eternal law into account *if he is a good and wise man.* There is not the slightest suggestion that laws enacted by someone who is not a good and wise man are not real laws and should not be obeyed. On the contrary, 'after they have been enacted and confirmed *it is not lawful ... to pass judgement on them, but only in accordance with them.*'

102. The useful distinction between 'ascending' and 'descending' theories of power originates with Professor Walter Ullmann. See, e.g., his *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 19.
103. *De civitate Dei* 19:17.
104. *Sermo* 62:13.
105. I.e. Flavius Claudius Julianus, emperor from 360 to 363. As to why Julian was 'an apostate, a wicked man, a worshipper of idols' see R. Panella, 'The Emperor Julian and the God of the Jews,' *Koinonia* 23 (1999); R. Smith, *Julian's Gods: Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate* (London: Routledge, 1995).
106. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 124:7.

CHAPTER 3

PRIVATE PROPERTY AND SLAVERY

We come next to two of the social and economic institutions that governments exist to uphold: private property and slavery. How, in the context of Augustine's account of human nature and relationships, are we to understand the place that these things occupy in the scheme of earthly life? At one level, it is of course not correct to speak of two 'institutions.' The Roman law conception of *dominium* – ownership – included slaves as a particular form of property. But slavery has human and moral dimensions that the possession of inanimate objects does not have,[1] and Augustine has a number of things to say about the relation between masters and slaves that deserve to be treated separately from his thoughts on ownership in general. In the first two sections of this chapter, we shall look at his remarks about the institution of private property with respect to its origin, legal nature and moral character. We shall pass then to the particular duties that attach to the ownership of property by Christians. Finally, we shall consider Augustine's view of slavery, again with particular reference to the ownership of slaves by Christian masters.

It will be as well to begin with two general comments. First, we make again the point that Augustine's 'theories' are nowhere presented to us in systematic form. We have to retrieve his opinions about private property and slavery from a range of different sources and *ad hoc* statements. Here, as in the preceding chapters, we shall give an impression of Augustine's thought as being more of a piece

than it is. As before, this degree of artificiality cannot be avoided, but it is a feature of our exposition that should be kept in mind. Second: in treating of private property and slavery, Augustine exhibits the same conservative habit of mind that we noted in discussing his treatment of obligation. Part of his purpose is to defend and justify the arrangements that we find in this world, notwithstanding the flawed and unworthy character of those arrangements. We suggested in the previous chapter that Augustine's political conservatism is a matter of both philosophical orientation and temperamental anxiety (see p. 75). We may suppose also that, as a bishop of the Catholic Church, he had no wish to offend the secular establishment to which the Church had come increasingly to look for support against heretics and schismatics (see Chapter 5). Just as he insists that we should not disobey the 'powers that be' save in extraordinary and closely defined circumstances, so also he believes that we should not challenge or outwardly dissociate ourselves from the institutions that those powers uphold. We must accept such things and conduct ourselves in relation to them in a manner consistent with the will of God. Everything that we find in the world has been ordained by Him for a purpose, even if that purpose is not understood by sinners or is disregarded by them. We have no right to feel aggrieved if the Divine plan seems for the time being to work to our disadvantage.

(a) Private Property: Origin and Character

Augustine is a good deal less precise as to the beginnings of property ownership than he is about the foundation of earthly government. As we have seen, one of his most important objectives in *De civitate Dei* is to explain the part that the Roman commonwealth has played in the working out of God's plan for the world. His understanding of the origin and functions of government is therefore presented as part of a compendious description of history, interpreted as the gradual working out of God's purposes. His approach to the

institution of private property does not have the same historical or developmental character. Most of his pronouncements on the subject are found in letters, sermons and commentaries intended to instruct the faithful in matters of everyday conduct. Pertinent comments are found also in sources produced during debates over the confiscation by the imperial government of the property of the Donatists (see pp. 159–169). In neither case was there any need to devise a historical or quasi-historical account of how or when private property began. Augustine does not tell us, except by implication, who was the first to claim individual proprietorship of any part of the earth or how that claim was made good. It is clear, however, that, in terms of its origin and continuing purposes, he thinks that private property is to be accounted for in the same way as coercive government. Running throughout his remarks we find the same three strands of explanation that we discussed in the previous chapter. Private property has come into being as a consequence of sin and continues to be an occasion of sin, but it has remedial and disciplinary functions also.

The assumption from which Augustine's 'theory' of property begins is that, had the Fall not occurred, the fruits of the earth would have been held as the common possession of mankind. The natural law – the principle that each should treat all others as he would wish to be treated by them – would have been enough to govern the distribution of natural resources. But one of the many forms in which human selfishness now declares itself is the desire that each individual has to expropriate the fruits of the earth to himself and shut others out from them. The psychological drive that accounts for our attachment to possessions is *avaritia*, greed; and greed is a dimension of self-love. More or less as a synonym, Augustine uses the word *cupiditas*, covetousness, also. Like the other dimensions of self-love, greed or covetousness is a hereditary fault of character, introduced by the folly of our first parents and passed down through the generations. It was when man fell away from the unity of God that he became aware of the plurality of wants and needs that now impel

him to accumulate possessions.[2] Conscious of our own loss – and even unbelievers have this consciousness – we make ourselves feel safe and important by striving to bring under our own control things that are outside ourselves.

Aside from its roots in the Scriptures, Augustine's explanation of private property once again reflects the version of Stoicism that had commended itself to Patristic authors generally. It represents in Christianized language the myth or conjecture that private ownership did not exist in the earliest days, the 'Golden Age,' of human history. Augustine's intellectual environment exposed him to Stoic doctrines directly; but it is not unreasonable to suppose that he is influenced also by the remarks of his teacher St Ambrose on the subject of property. 'Nature therefore gave rise to a common right only,' says St Ambrose; 'usurpation produced private right.'[3] Again: 'Our Lord God intended the earth to be the common possession of all men, and to serve them all with its fruits; but greed created separate rights of possession.'[4]

Thus, although he does not offer a detailed explanation of its origins, Augustine believes that ownership understood as the exclusive possession of things is not a fact of nature. It has arisen and is sustained by convention. Like all forms of inequality and exclusion, it was not part of God's intention in making the world. Insofar as private ownership is an artifice overriding the common possession of things that nature prescribes, it is, strictly speaking, a kind of usurpation or theft. Like the State, it came into existence as a result of self-love, and it continues to be one of the most typical manifestations of self-love. In the world as it has become, there are no bounds to human greed, nor are there limits to the efforts of acquisition to which greed will drive us. To want to own anything, Augustine observes, is to want to own everything.

> Where does worldly covetousness lead you, and to what point does it finally carry you? At first you wanted a farm; then you wanted to own an estate: you wanted to shut your neighbours out. When you had shut

> them out, you set your heart on the possessions of other neighbours, and you extended your covetous desires until you had reached the shore. And now that you have arrived at the shore you covet the islands; and having made the whole earth your own you would no doubt then reach out for the sky.[5]

Property laws are related directly to this unbounded appetite for possession. They are as it were the means by which avarice is defended and made respectable; they are expedients generated by fallen human beings as part of the activity of stealing the earth from one another.

But though the existence of private property is in this sense deplorable, Christians are obliged to respect it nonetheless. The ideal Christian life is one in which no one regards anything as his own.[6] This does not mean, however, that Christians are justified in disregarding or subverting the laws that create and safeguard rights of ownership. Such laws are beneficial. Like all human laws, they are to be honoured as a matter of religious duty by those able to perceive how they fit into the Divine scheme. How are property laws beneficial, if they are only the contrivances by which greed is made legitimate and the gains of the greedy protected? The answer is, perhaps, obvious by now. What is true of law in general is true of property laws in particular; perhaps it is true of property laws especially. Such laws are among the means by which God allows an approximate and serviceable order to be maintained in a fallen world. They are regrettable but, having regard to our fallen state, necessary to human existence; in this way, they are expressions of the Divine mercy. They discourage the violence and robbery that would arise if men were free to compete without restraint for the scarce resources of the world.[7] They cannot eradicate greed and competition, but they keep them within bounds and punish those who pass those bounds. Once again, an institution that is unrighteous in its inception and purposes is suffered to perform a valuable function.

The fact remains, however, that an individual's title to 'his' property is not attributable to needs or characteristics that are natural or intrinsic to human beings. Rights of exclusive ownership, as distinct from a general right to make use of the fruits of the earth, have no eternal warrant. This is a principle that Augustine states very clearly in his commentary on the Gospel according to St John:

> By what right does every man possess what he possesses? Is it not by human right [*Nonne iure humano*]? For by Divine right [*iure divino*] 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.'[8] God has made poor and rich of one clay: the same earth supports poor and rich men alike. By human right, however, someone says, This estate is mine, this house is mine, this slave is mine. By human right, then: that is, by right of the emperors. Why? Because God has distributed to mankind those very human rights through the emperors and kings of this world ... But, you say, What is the emperor to me? It is by a right derived from him that you possess the land. Otherwise, if you take away rights created by emperors, who will dare to say, That estate is mine, or that slave is mine, or this house is mine? ... Do not say, What is the king to me? What are your possessions to you, then? For it is by rights derived from kings that possessions are enjoyed. If, therefore, you have said, What is the king to me? do not say that your possessions are yours; because, in doing so, you are referring precisely to those human rights by which men enjoy their possessions.[9]

The argument of this passage is a straightforward argument from natural law; it is a statement of the difference between nature and convention. Commenting on it, A.J. Carlyle says: '[Augustine's] distinction between the *jus divinum* and the *jus humanum* is not indeed the same as that between the *jus naturale* and the *jus civile*, but at least it is parallel to it'[10] Quite what Dr Carlyle means by 'parallel to it' is not clear. The point, rather, is one that we mentioned in discussing Augustine's conception of law (see pp. 72, 78): that Augustine, like the other Fathers who took up the Stoic doctrine of natural law, is inclined to use the terms 'natural law,' 'eternal law' and 'Divine law' interchangeably. He thus uses these expressions with less precision than is expected by those accus-

tomed to the later use of them by St Thomas Aquinas.[11] But his meaning is clear enough. The Divine or eternal or natural law, by which it is impossible for fallen men to live in practice, makes available to us the resources of the earth for our support, but it does not confer upon us a title to the earth itself or to any part of it. The earth and its fullness are God's. What we call property rights arise and are maintained, albeit with Divine consent, by the *ius humanum*: by the legislative acts of earthly rulers.

This positivistic account of private ownership carries with it an immediate and important consequence. An established principle of Roman law is that the emperor is *legibus solutus*: not bound by the laws. If he abides by his own laws, he does so voluntarily. He cannot be bound by any positive law because, by definition, no positive law is higher than the sovereign's will: *Quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem.*[12] It follows that what 'the emperors and kings of this world' can confer they can by the same authority remove. If property rights are grounded solely in human law, it is clear that a sovereign authority may deprive a proprietor of his property if it sees fit. In what circumstances might it be appropriate to do this? Augustine's view is that, at least *de iure*, the only people who have a right to property – granted that, in a perfect world, there would be no such rights at all – are those who use their property well, or who at any rate do not use it ill.[13] Those who do use their property unrighteously, even if that property has been acquired according to the letter of the law, are making use of goods that rightfully belong to another: that is, to the righteous. *Aurum eius proprium est*, Augustine declares, *qui illo bene utitur*: 'Gold belongs to him who uses it well'; and from this he concludes that 'if a man calls his own that which he does not hold righteously, his voice will not be that of a just possessor, but the wickedness of an impudent usurper.'[14] Wisely enough, Augustine does not try to offer any detailed prescription of how, when or on exactly what grounds impudent usurpers may have their property taken away from them. As a concession to practice he admits that the ownership and use of property by the wicked has usu-

ally to be tolerated *de facto*. But the legal right to property is, he thinks, conditional in principle upon the proprietor's moral character, or at least upon his putting his property to good or harmless use. Everything that we have is ultimately the property of God. What we call 'ours' is only lent or entrusted to us by God and 'distributed to mankind' by Him through the medium of human law. To use it in the service of sin is to abuse a trust.

First and foremost, what Augustine means by righteous use of property is use in accordance with the teachings of the Church, or at least use that is not outwardly at variance with those teachings. In Augustine's day, this issue was of more than abstract interest. One of the measures employed by the imperial authorities in Africa against the Donatists was the confiscation of their church buildings and other property and the imposition of heavy fines. In remonstrating against such penalties, the Donatists appear to have resorted to the kind of 'labour-mixing' argument that we now associate especially with John Locke. They protested, in effect, that the effort expended by them in accumulating their possessions has created a title that no one can with justice remove.[15] But Augustine will have none of this. Property rights are not established by the investment of labour in what is claimed as one's own. They are conferred by the laws of kings and emperors, and, under human law, there is no such thing as a right that kings and emperors cannot annul. Moreover, it is by God that rulers are authorized to assign property to individuals, and rulers who are Christians must acknowledge themselves bound to act in accordance with the will of God. The abrogation of rights held under human law is therefore justifiable in terms of the same higher law – the Divine will – that in certain circumstances can justify us in disobeying the powers that be. Such a step should not be taken with any ulterior motive – and Augustine is aware of how easy it is for ulterior motives to creep into such matters; but it can certainly be taken.

> We disapprove of anyone who, taking advantage of [the imperial edict authorising confiscation of Donatist property,] persecutes you not with loving concern for your correction, but with the malice of an enemy. [But] since no earthly thing can be possessed rightly except under the Divine law, according to which all things belong to the righteous, or human law, which is in the power of the kings of the earth, you err in calling those things yours that you do not possess as righteous men and which you have forfeited according to the laws of earthly kings; and it is nowhere to the point for you to plead, 'We have laboured to accumulate these things'; for you may read what is written: 'The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.'[16]

Any conception of what later generations would call a 'natural right' to private property is therefore alien to Augustine. Alien also is the idea that property rights, once created, are sacred or inviolable. 'The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just': which, in plain terms, means that it can be confiscated and redistributed by the State's authorities acting on behalf of the Church.

The question of how Augustine understands the relation between the Church and the authorities who might be called upon to do this is an important one, and we shall look at it in our final chapter. His conception of the legal nature of property rights is momentous, and medieval political controversialists made the most of it. By the middle of the twelfth century, the passage quoted above from *In Ioannis evangelium* had been incorporated into the canon law of the Church. It appears, as the canon *Quo iure*, in the *Decretum Gratiani* of 1139,[17] and from this source it was to be pressed into service during quarrels over papal claims to supremacy in temporals. By the late thirteenth century, Augustine's argument about righteous use and confiscation had developed into the famous *dominium* theory of Giles of Rome. According to Giles – who is admittedly the most extreme of all papal theorists – all temporal *dominium*, all 'lordship,' is held at the pleasure of the pope. Property belongs only to the righteous; but the righteous are those who are in good standing with the Church, and the Church is personified in the pope. Those who

are not in good standing with the Church – those whom papal judgement has excluded from the sacraments by excommunication – may therefore have their property taken away from them, even if that property is a kingdom.[18]

(b) Private Property as Remedial and Disciplinary

The natural state of things, then, is that the world's resources have been provided by God for common use by all. The fact that they are now divided into parcels of private property is a further visible consequence of the Fall. Like the State, private property is an institution called into being by sin. It expresses and perpetuates the sin of *avaritia* or *cupiditas*. Rights of exclusive ownership do not arise by nature. They are defined and protected by human legislation only. But property laws are to be respected nonetheless, as one of the devices that Divine providence furnishes to contain the conflict to which avarice gives rise. They are an imperfect and external remedy, but they are a remedy of sorts. Augustine believes moreover that, like the institutions of government in general, private property has a disciplinary purpose, in the dual sense that we noted earlier: it is a means of both trial and punishment.

Considered under the aspect of trial, possessions are notoriously a stumbling-block to the feet of the faithful. 'They who wish to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many hurtful and foolish lusts.'[19] Wealth (by which Augustine usually means money, but his remarks may be applied to private property of all kinds) is one of the things to which we are attracted most readily by the gravitational force of disordered love. This is so partly because wealth provides us with the means of acquiring the other things for which we long: power, glory, safety, luxury. But we love wealth for its own sake too. Such love is damaging on every front. Too much in the way of material goods makes the individual lazy, arrogant and self-indulgent. The example of Rome shows that the moral decline of a society is related directly to the level of prosperity that its

members enjoy.[20] What is worse, earthly goods tend to draw our eyes away from our heavenly destination. Even among those who love God, there are few who do not love money also, and it is all too easy to be led astray by that love. Many who serve God in the Church do so in the hope of material gain, even if they manage to deceive themselves as to their motives. If we loved God as we ought, we should not love money at all; but the most we can hope for is that there are some who do not love it too much. The rich man finds it easy to believe that his true resting place is here. Wealth is a temptation; as in the case of all temptations, our faith is strengthened by the effort of resistance.[21]

Considered under the aspect of punishment, riches are in one way and another a constant source of suffering. Most obviously, the poor are oppressed by the rich and live in misery. But poverty is a possibility from which no one is exempt. Everyone who is involved in life's struggle has reason to fear it. The world, Augustine says in a striking passage of commentary on Psalm 65:5, is like a great sea, 'bitter with salt, troubled with storms, where men of perverse and depraved desires have become like fish devouring one another.' Big fish eat small fish and are eaten by bigger fish again. The acquisition of wealth by one individual is bound to be attended by the misfortune of another; indeed, covetousness often makes us wish misfortune on others. Augustine instinctively thinks of economic activity as a zero-sum game. No one can profit except through another's loss; no one can come into an inheritance except through someone's death; no one can rise in the world except through someone else's fall.[22] Riches bring anxiety even to the wealthiest individual. For as long as we possess things, we suffer always from the fear that they will vanish, and the more we have of them, the greater the fear. 'As for riches and high rank, what comfort do they bring? ... For, when possessed, they produce more pain through our fear of losing them than was produced by the strength of our desire to possess them in the first place.'[23] A flame, a mouse, a thief can so easily take from us what we love;[24] money can so quickly roll away. Inasmuch as it is a

source of ceaseless anxiety, wealth is really only another kind of poverty:

> For even if men have plenty of money on earth ... they are filled more with fear than with pleasure. For what is so unreliable as something that rolls? It is not without good reason that money itself is made round, because it does not remain still. Such men, therefore, despite what they have, are poor nonetheless.[25]
>
> Do not call these things riches, for they are not truly so. They are full of poverty, and always liable to accidents. What sort of riches are they, for the sake of which you live in fear: of the robber, of your own servant even, lest he kill you and take them and run away? If they were true riches, they would bring you safety.[26]

Sheer bad luck, or the malfeasance or 'success' of others, might make us destitute tomorrow, and the dread of poverty makes even the rich miserable. But apart from the material realities of poverty and loss, the suffering associated with love of wealth has a spiritual aspect also. It is a dreadful hunger of the soul. So viewed, greed is another illustration of our moral confusion and disempowerment. The anguish of those who set their hearts on wealth is a punishment, but is it not a self-inflicted one? Alongside sexual desire (*concupiscentia*) and the lust for power, greed is one of the most incessant of human drives. Men are impelled by a desire to heap up possessions that is both senseless and punitive. It is senseless because no final security is to be found in such things: we are fools if we allow our happiness to depend on things that we are bound to lose. It is punitive because it is a desire not capable of being satisfied: a desire that is only intensified by the attempt to gratify it. Even when we recognize the futility of material things, we respond to that recognition by trying to get more of them. When we get what we want, we find that we now want something else. We bring suffering upon ourselves, but, such is the helplessness of our condition, we cannot refrain from doing so. Those whose love of wealth is inordinate have embarked on a wretched quest to which there is no end. No temporal

attachment can bring true happiness, and those who put their trust in earthly goods are doomed to pain.[27]

Correctly understood, therefore, the mental state of the covetous is a condition of the profoundest tragedy. Those who hope to find joy in the things of this world are like starving men who lick shadows or prisoners looking for rags to hide their shackles.[28] The search for possessions is one of the ways in which we try to escape the grief of loss that afflicts us all. It is a dimension of that restlessness which Augustine identifies as the malaise of the heart cut off from the true nature of love.[29] Our fixation upon possessions arises because we have lost the only Possession that can bring us peace.[30] The things of this world 'cannot stand, because they are not what He is: for nothing, O Soul, can satisfy thee save He Who created thee.'[31] Men strive after material gain with no assurance of achieving it; when they have achieved it they have no assurance that they will not lose it. Gold and silver bring torment to the heart of the miser: the desire to pile up possessions is an agony to us, yet we love it. As so often, our fallen nature drives us to seek the things that harm us most, and to love the very harm that they do. The things that we think will make us happy make us slaves.[32]

(c) Christian Ownership

So much for the origin and character of private property and the disposition of mind by which we are impelled to seek it. Given that individual ownership is a contrivance of men and, like all such contrivances, involved *ab origine* with sin, what should the Christian's attitude to it be? As one might expect, this is a matter to which Augustine devotes a good deal of attention. It is a fair supposition, borne out by his letters and sermons, that, in his pastoral life – and quite possibly in his own conscience – he found himself having to deal with two difficulties that Christian teachers had encountered from very early days: the seeming inconsistency of the Scriptures on the subject of possessions, and the dilemma presented by the appar-

ent lack of consonance between Christ's teaching on poverty and the realities and necessities of daily life.

The first of these difficulties is clear. On the one hand, we find in the Book of Genesis that the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph – are portrayed as persons of considerable wealth. We learn moreover that their success in acquiring riches is the reward of their fidelity to God. In the New Testament, on the other hand, Christ appears to require of His disciples the renunciation of material goods, and such renunciation is identified as an index of spiritual perfection. The wealthy young man who came to Christ for advice at Matthew 19:21 received a plain answer: 'If you would be perfect, go and sell all that you have, and give to the poor ... and follow me.' When the disciples were sent forth to preach they were told to take nothing at all with them, 'neither staves nor a wallet nor bread nor money.'[33] We are taught that a camel can pass more easily through the eye of a needle than a rich man into the kingdom of heaven.[34] God, it would seem, has changed His mind about the relation between wealth and righteousness.

As to the second difficulty, the Acts of the Apostles celebrates the simplicity of heart with which the post-Ascension Church received Christ's teaching about material possessions. 'And all that believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and shared them with all men, as every man had need.'[35] But a generous indifference to the things of this world came more easily to those who supposed that Christ would return in their own lifetimes than to later generations. As the years went by and it proved necessary to reinterpret Christ's promise of an imminent Second Coming, it became obvious that neither the Church as an institution nor her individual members could function without at least some possessions. The question therefore arose, in various forms, of how much property the Christian may have, and how it is to be held; nor was this a question easily or soon answered. In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, it became the focus of a dispute of extraordinary bitterness within the Franciscan Order,

when the Franciscan Spirituals seceded from the original foundation of St Francis to embrace a life of absolute material poverty.[36] In the Roman Empire of the fourth and fifth centuries, many converts to the faith were people with substantial fortunes. Some still took the gospel injunction literally and gave away all that they had. Augustine's teacher St Ambrose and his friend and fellow bishop St Paulinus of Nola[37] were cases in point. Others did not, and poor Christians were inclined to look askance at the affluence of some of their co-religionists. We might add that the various officials and important personages with whom Augustine's public life brought him into contact, and with whom he wished to be on good terms, were hardly paupers. Inevitably, the question presented itself to his mind from several directions: what is the proper attitude of the Christian to material goods?

Augustine's approach to this question is a balanced one. He does not advocate the complete renunciation of possessions, nor does he counsel extreme poverty or asceticism as a way of life. As we have remarked already, Augustine – Augustine the conservative – has no quarrel with private property as an established fact, despite its indubitable connection with the sin of avarice. The Christian should uphold the laws of property, as he should uphold almost all laws; and there is no reason why he should not own property himself. On the one hand, money and property cannot be unconditional goods. So much is clear from the fact that the wicked have them as well as the righteous. God has given them to bad men as well as good because He wishes us to know that they have no intrinsic value. On the other hand, those who have riches can devote them to works of charity, and the more of them we have the better placed are we to do this. Clearly, there is no harm in gold and silver considered as inanimate objects. Harm comes only when we choose to love gold and silver as ends rather than to make proper use of them as means.[38]

The fact that Christians own things is therefore not at odds with the teaching of Christ. Total poverty – giving away the whole of

one's property – is a way of perfection, but no one is required to be perfect. The ordinary Christian does not sin in retaining his possessions, just as he does not sin in marrying *ad remedium concupiscentiae* even though celibacy is the more perfect state.[39] Property is, however, to be valued only for the sake of what it enables us to do for others. What we have in excess of our needs we should therefore distribute to the poor.[40] In some ways, indeed, it is a misfortune to be very rich. Great danger, material as well as spiritual, attends great wealth, and it is better to be satisfied with a modest competence. 'Seek a sufficiency only: seek what is enough, and want no more. Everything else is a weight rather than a help, a burden rather than an honour.'[41] But there is nothing objectionable even in great wealth if it is held and used with godly intent.

> Read the scriptures and you will find that Abraham was a wealthy man. So that you may know that what is blamed is not wealth but covetousness, note the fact that Abraham had plenty of gold, silver, cattle, furniture; he was a wealthy man, and Lazarus, a poor man, was lifted up into his bosom: a poor man into the bosom of a rich man.[42] But were not these men who were rich in God and poor in greed?[43]

> If you possess ... riches, I do not reproach it. An inheritance has come to you; your father was a wealthy man and has left it to you. Or you have come by them honourably; you have a house full of the rewards of honest toil. I do not reproach it. Do not call these things riches, though. For if you call them riches, you will love them, and if you love them you will perish by them.[44]

The problem of the wealth of the Patriarchs therefore turns out to be not a problem after all. There is no sin in being rich. Sin lies in an inordinate love of riches: in the desire to have them for their own sake or for the sake of unworthy goals; and this, of course, is a sin that the poor are just as liable to commit as the wealthy. 'Avarice is the desire to be rich, not the being rich already.'[45] As is so often true, outward appearances are no guide. 'You see that wealthy man standing over there? Perhaps there is money in him but no covet-

ousness, whereas in you there is covetousness but no money.'[46] Blessed are the poor *in spirit*, Christ tells us.[47] Poverty is a virtue, but poverty correctly understood is not a material state; it is a disposition of the mind or spirit. Indeed, those who are poor in the material sense can sin by being proud of their poverty or resentful of it. Nor does the requirement that riches should be put to good use imply that material poverty is to be despised. Wealthy Christians must resist the temptation to feel superior to their brethren who are not in a position to do as many good works as they.[48]

In an uncomplicated sense, then, possessions may be regarded as a blessing, but we must recognize them as a blessing that is temporary and instrumental merely. They are to be devoted to the service of spiritual ends, and our grasp of them should be suitably loose and contingent. Material goods should be desired only as preliminaries to the eternal goods that the Christian hopes to receive. If material goods become an obstacle to those eternal goods, the Christian should relinquish them without complaint.[49] Augustine is well aware of how easily we can delude ourselves into believing that our motives are honourable. The test of whether our love of material things is inordinate or not comes when we are required to give them up:

> When we have temporal goods, we usually imagine that we do not love them; but it is when they begin to leave us that we begin to discover what kind of men we are. We have a thing without loving it when we can relinquish it without grieving for it.[50]

It comes as no surprise to find that Augustine is hostile to the practice of usury: to the taking of interest on loans. He has, however, no apparent awareness of previous classical thought on the subject. Aristotle also had disapproved of usury, but Augustine's objection is different from Aristotle's, and does not involve any technical consideration. Aristotle is critical of usury because he thinks it an unnatural, and hence improper, use of money.[51] His

argument is, in effect, an argument about its inflationary consequences: usury has the effect of creating fictitious or paper values not based on the exchange of anything real.[52] This is an objection that makes a certain amount of economic sense, and it was later to commend itself to St Thomas Aquinas, as part of the great thirteenth-century revival of Aristotelianism.[53] But Augustine has no concern with the economics of usury. He condemns it simply because it is forbidden by Scripture and because, as he says, the moneylender is a wretched creature who wrings gain from the misfortunes of others. Even moneylenders themselves know how vile their practice is. They do it anyway; but, having regard to what human nature has become, this is hardly unexpected.[54] Nor is Augustine's objection merely to the taking of excessive interest on loans. He condemns all lending of money at interest, despite the fact that, as he notes with regret, there are some members of the clergy who do it.[55] The only kind of interest that is permitted to Christians, he tells us, is that which they receive when they give to the poor. To give to the poor is to give to Christ, and Christ will always repay the giver with more than he gave.[56]

(d) Slavery

What of the particular sort of property ownership involved in the relation between master and slave? Augustine's thinking on this subject depends primarily on the testimony of Scripture; but, once again, we are undoubtedly right to suppose that it reflects the Stoic natural law tradition also. With respect to slavery, that tradition was itself a response to the kind of classical assumptions exemplified in Aristotle. Aristotle had believed that there is such a thing as slavery by nature. Nature has, he thinks, designed some people for heavy toil while withholding from them the rational or deliberative capacities that make non-servile men capable of virtue and happiness. Not all who are slaves in fact are slaves by nature, but those who are slaves by nature have no good apart from the good of the master to

whom they belong: they are not capable of achieving any end of their own.[57] For the Stoics, by contrast, no one is a slave under the natural law: slavery is a creation of convention only, and all men are equal in morally relevant respects.[58] This latter view is the one that the Christian scriptures support,[59] and it is the view that Augustine accepts. No one, he holds, is by nature either a master or a servant. God, we remember, meant us to have dominion over the beasts only, not over each other.

How, in that case, has slavery arisen? Augustine's answer is the one that we have come to expect. The kind of inequality that we find epitomized in slavery has come about through sin.

> It is with justice, we believe, that the condition of slavery is the result of sin ... The primary cause of slavery is sin, which brings a man under the dominion of his fellows ... By nature, as God first created us, no one is the slave either of a man or of sin. But it is true also that servitude itself is ordained as a punishment by that law which enjoins the preservation of the order of nature and forbids its disruption. For if nothing had been done in violation of that law, there would have been no need for the discipline of servitude as a punishment.[60]

So understood, slavery has the same threefold character as coercive government and inanimate private property. It was created by the self-centred desire that individuals have to bring other people and things under their power, and the same desire explains its continued existence. But slavery has an ameliorative or 'remedial' aspect also. It is another of the institutions that preserves as much order as is possible in a disrupted world. Augustine remarks, indeed, that masters have reason to thank the Christian religion because it teaches slaves to be faithful and obedient.[61] Slavery is moreover disciplinary: it is one of the instruments by which the Divine providence punishes the sinner and purifies the righteous. It is undeniable that the penalty of servitude is unevenly distributed: many wicked men are masters and many righteous ones are slaves. But this is not something that Augustine sees as an objection; for 'when men are subjected to

one another in a peaceful order, the lowly position does as much good to the servant as the lofty one does harm to the master.' In any case, all things come about according to the judgement of God, 'with Whom there is no unrighteousness, and Who knows how to assign suitable punishments to every variety of offence.'[62]

Notwithstanding this generally favourable analysis, it may on the face of it seem odd that Augustine is prepared to countenance the ownership of slaves by Christian masters. 'The Christian,' he tells us, 'should be such that he does not glory over other men.'[63] Insofar as slavery is symptomatic of a desire to do precisely that, one would have thought that the righteous ought to dissociate themselves from it. But here, as elsewhere, Augustine's instinct is to defend the established order. The reader may feel that he is led by his conservatism away from the true logical outcome of his premisses; but, rightly or wrongly, he is a defender, or at least not an opponent, of slavery even when both master and slave are Christians. Because slavery, like the other devices of order and government, has a positive part to play in this life, the Christian should do nothing that might undermine it. Augustine therefore never suggests that slave owners who become Christians should liberate their slaves as a matter of course. Nor does he doubt that Christian slaves have an ordinary duty to submit to pagan masters. Christians who are slaves should not repine at the penal condition under which God has seen fit to place them. The obligation that Christian slaves have to their masters, like the obligation that Christian citizens have to the State, is a religious one.

> It has been your lot to become a Christian and to have a man as your master. You were not made a Christian so that you might despise the condition of servitude. For when you serve a man by Christ's command, you are not serving a man, but Him Who commanded you ... Behold: He has not made men free from being servants; rather, He has made good servants from bad servants.[64]

Given the kind of world in which we live, slavery, though not a

natural condition, is not objectionable. Insofar as it contributes to social integrity, it is to be valued, or at least accepted as a necessary evil. Some consolation is to be found in the reflection that there are worse things than being a slave. It is better to be a corporeal slave to another human being than a spiritual slave to sin, and the master who is wicked is in a much more perilous condition than the slave who is righteous.[65] Even if one is enslaved in body, one can be free in mind and soul. For Augustine, we remember, the conditions that we are constrained to accept during this life do not matter, as long as faith and religious duty are not compromised. He therefore does not object to the ownership of slaves by Christians or of Christian slaves by pagans; and in this view he is sustained by the authority of St Paul.[66] We may guess also that Augustine is following the lead of St Ambrose in believing that a slave is his master's equal by nature, and may be his superior in virtue. In a phrase that puts Augustine's position in a nutshell, St Ambrose says that no one who is not captured by the love of this world is really a slave.[67]

In view of all this, what principles should govern the relations between Christian masters and their slaves? Masters must realize that slavery is a purely outward condition, and therefore ultimately unimportant. They must understand that beneath all external differences lies the truth – a truth perceived by the Stoics and confirmed by Scripture – that we are brethren. When we use the Lord's Prayer we acknowledge this brotherhood by calling upon a common Father. We are united by our shared needs and common humanity, and by the faith that tells us that no mere man is truly the lord of any other. The relation of master and slave confers a kind of benefit on both parties. It gives to masters opportunities to practise fairness and kindness; it enables slaves to train themselves in the virtues of humility and submission. Christian slaves must be obedient and dutiful to their masters; they must accept their station in life without resentment. For their part, masters will do well to remember that they have as much need of their slaves as their slaves do of them. They must behave towards them with respect and consideration.

They must not lord it over them or regard them as chattels to be bought and sold. Above all, they must take pains over their education in the faith, especially if they are not Christians already. Like the Patriarchs of old, the true *paterfamilias* will bring up his whole household in the service of God.[68]

It is pertinent to point again to the contrast between Augustine's view of slavery and that of Aristotle. For Aristotle, slaves are living implements merely; they have no function other than to secure the purposes of their masters. Masters should care for their slaves, but only in the way that one might care for a tool or a domestic animal. For Augustine, all men have the same purpose whether they are slaves or free: to know and serve God. Masters and slaves who are Christians should treat one another with a regard founded upon a mutual recognition of God's Fatherhood. Masters whose slaves are not Christians should nurture and educate them as if they were their own children. Beneath all conventional differences there subsists a relation of moral and spiritual equality.

* * * * *

Augustine's remarks on private property and slavery reflect the moderation and conservatism typical of his general attitude to the arrangements by which earthly life is regulated. Despite the variety of its sources, the unifying theme of his thought is his insistence on the distinction between outward facts and inward motives. Private property, slavery and the inequalities associated with them are not natural features of the world. They are related to sin and strife in ways that are now familiar to us. If they are necessary and beneficial, this is so only because the world is wicked. But the righteous man is not called upon to repudiate these things. His duty is to accept them as expressions of the Divine will and to use them well. The moral issues that private property and slavery involve have nothing to do with externals. As always for Augustine, the important consideration is intentionality. Property – including property in

other human beings – can be held without shame or sin, but we must not abuse our property. What we have is to be viewed as entrusted to us by God. We must not become attached to our possessions as ends or attribute to them a meaning that they do not have, nor may masters lose sight of the humanity that they share with their slaves. We may assign to all kinds of property a sort of value, but we must recognize that it is an instrumental value only.

> Use the world, but do not let the world make you a prisoner. You are passing on the journey that you have undertaken: you have arrived only to depart again, not to remain. You are passing on your journey, and this life is nothing but a wayside inn. Use money in the way that a traveller at an inn uses table, cup, jug and bed: not intending to stay there, but to leave them behind.[69]

The correct state of mind for the Christian is one appropriate to those who understand that earthly life is a pilgrimage in which no true joy or beauty is to be found. For those who cling to the things of this world Augustine has a succinct piece of advice: *Relinque omnes amores. Pulchrior est ille qui fecit coelum et terram.* 'Leave all your loves. He Who made heaven and earth is more beautiful.'[70]

NOTES

1. By Augustine's day, Roman law had itself come to recognize these dimensions. The power of a master over his slaves was originally absolute, extending even to that of life and death; but the law was gradually ameliorated from the later republican period onwards (see, e.g., Suetonius, *Claudius* 25). On this subject see W.W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery. The Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, repr. 2001).
2. *De vera religione* 21:41.
3. *De officiis* 1:28.
4. *In psalmum CXVIII* 8:22; cf. *De officiis* 1:11.
5. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 39:7. Augustine suggests at *Sermo* 50:3 that even people who display moderation often do so in the hope of making bigger gains

through restraint than they would through naked ambition: *Poculum respuunt, quia fluvium sitiunt* – 'they reject the cup because they are thirsty for the river.'

6. *Epistulae* 157:4:39.
7. *De civitate Dei* 18:2; *De libero arbitrio* 1:15:32–33.
8. I Corinthians 10:26.
9. *In Ioannis evangelium* 6:25–26.
10. *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, vol. 1, p. 141. The distinction between *ius* and *lex* is not one that need here detain us.
11. See *Summa theologiae* IaIIae 91, etc.
12. See *Digesta* 1:3:3; 1:4:1 in T. Mommsen and P. Krüger (eds), *Corpus iuris civilis* (Berlin, 1872–1877); cf. St Ambrose, *Epistulae* 21:9; *Apologia prophetae David* 16; Ps.-Ambrose, *Apologia prophetae David altera* 3.
13. There are suggestions of a similar doctrine in Roman law itself (see Gaius, *Institutiones*, ed. F. de Zulueta (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 1:53: *Male enim nostro iure uti non debemus*; Justinian, *Institutiones* 1:8:2: *Expedit enim reipublicae ne quis re sua male utatur*). But, as A.J. Carlyle puts it, 'St Augustine's phrases ... are much wider in scope, and indicate a much more developed theory than those of the lawyers' (*A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, vol 1, p. 142).
14. *Sermo* 50:4.
15. For Locke's version of this argument, see *Second Treatise* (ed. P. Laslett, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), sect. 25 etc.; see also I.W. Hampsher-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), ch. 2.
16. *Epistulae* 93:12:50, quoting Proverbs 13:22; cf. *Epistulae* 153:6:26.
17. Dist. 8, c. 1, in E. Friedberg (ed.), *Corpus iuris canonici* (Leipzig, 1879–81), 1:12–13.
18. Giles of Rome, *De ecclesiastica potestate* 2:7–9 (for bibliographical details see Chapter 5, n. 6). J.B. Morrall is hardly right to say that '[i]n his second book [in Book 2 of *De ecclesiastica potestate*], Giles enters realms of which Augustine can hardly have dreamed. He proceeds to argue that the validity of any ownership of private property (*dominium*) depends ... on loyal membership of the Church. It is this argument, the so-called *dominium* theory, which constitutes the real novelty of Giles' position' (*Political Thought in Medieval Times* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), p. 87). Giles's ecclesiology is far

different from Augustine's, but Augustine certainly 'dreamed' that unbelief or heterodoxy might be a ground for confiscation of property.

19. I Timothy 6:9, quoted at *Sermo* 85:6.
20. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1179a4; cf. *De civitate Dei* 2:18–20.
21. *In Ioannis evangelium* 40:10; *De civitate Dei* 1:8; *Enarrationes in psalmos* 131:19.
22. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 64:9.
23. *Epistulae* 130:2:3; cf. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 83:3; 131:18; *De civitate Dei* 4:3; *Sermo* 113:4.
24. *De vera religione* 38:69.
25. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 83:3.
26. *Sermo* 113:4.
27. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 39:7; *De vera religione* 21:41.
28. *Confessions* 9:4:10; *Enarrationes in psalmos* 68:2:18.
29. *Confessions* 1:1.
30. *De vera religione* 21:41.
31. *Sermo* 125:11.
32. *Sermo* 50:2–7; *De vera religione* 38:69.
33. Matthew 10:10; Luke 9:3; 10:4.
34. Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25.
35. Acts 2:44–45.
36. On this subject see D. Douie, *The Nature and Effect of the Heresy of the Fraticelli* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1932); M.D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of the Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order* (London: SPCK, 1961).
37. See F. Holmes Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*; D. E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).
38. *Sermo* 50:2–7.
39. *Epistulae* 157:4. The Church found it necessary at an early stage to make a distinction between 'counsels' and 'commandments.' The 'counsels' or 'evangelical counsels' are those parts of Christ's teaching that are supererogatory rather than binding upon everyone. They do not state necessary conditions of salvation, but give advice to those who wish to aim at the highest

achievable standard of Christian perfection. We do well if we follow them, but we do not sin if we do not. The distinction was introduced precisely to avoid the conclusion that a literal interpretation of Scripture seems to require: that we can only be saved if we give away all our property, are persecuted and despised, etc. See *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York and London: McGraw Hill, 1967), vol. 4, *sv* 'Counsels, Evangelical.'

40. *Sermo* 50:2–7; 85:4–7.
41. *Sermo* 85:5.
42. Cf. Genesis 13:2; Luke 16:19–31.
43. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 51:10.
44. *Sermo* 113:4.
45. *Sermo* 85:6.
46. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 51:10.
47. Matthew 5:3.
48. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 85:3; 131:19; *Sermo* 50:2–7; 85:4–7.
49. *Epistulae* 157:4:32–35.
50. *De vera religione* 47:92.
51. See Aristotle, *Politics* 1258b2–8.
52. Money, he says. 'came into being for the sake of exchange; interest makes it increase,' For Aristotle's thoughts on the 'unnaturalness' of commercial exchange generally, see M.I. Finley. 'Aristotle and Economic Analysis,' in J. Barnes et al. (eds), *Articles on Aristotle*, vol 2: *Ethics and Politics* (London: Duckworth, 1977).
53. See *Summa theologiae* IIaIIae 78.
54. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 36:3:5; 38:11.
55. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 128:6.
56. *Sermo* 86:3.
57. Aristotle, *Politics* 1254b16–24; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1102b13–1103a3; W.W. Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle on Slaves and Women,' in Barnes et al., *Essays on Aristotle*, vol. 2.
58. See Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 4.
59. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek nor slave nor free man; for you are all one in Jesus Christ. Whether we be Jews or gentiles, slaves or free, we are all

baptized into a single body' (Galatians 3:28; cf. I Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 3:11).

60. *De civitate Dei* 19:15.
61. See *Enarrationes in psalmos* 124:7–8.
62. *De civitate Dei* 19:15.
63. *In Ioannis epistulam* 8:8.
64. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 124:7; cf. *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* 2:77.
65. *De civitate Dei* 19:15; *Enarrationes in psalmos* 124:8.
66. 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men' (Ephesians 6:5–7).
67. *De Ioseph patriarcha* 4.
68. *De civitate Dei* 19:15–16; *Enarrationes in psalmos* 69:7; 124:7–8; *In Ioannis epistulam* 8:14; *De sermone Domini* 1:19:59; 2:4:16; *Sermo* 58:2.
69. *In Ioannis evangelium* 40:10.
70. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 39:7.

CHAPTER 4
WAR AND PEACE

Augustine has a good deal to say about war and armed conflict in general, and about the nature and conditions of earthly peace. The prominence that these themes have in his thought is not difficult to account for. As we saw in Chapter 2, a unity of intention lies behind the *longueurs* and digressions of *De civitate Dei*. Augustine's purpose in writing it was to deconstruct the ideology of a people proud of having extended its sway over the world by feats of arms. An evaluation of Rome's place in history necessarily involved a detailed commentary on her military exploits. More significantly, perhaps, Augustine's own lifetime coincided with the invasion of the Roman Empire by the 'barbarian' tribes from the north.[1] On 9 August, 378, Rome suffered one of the most severe defeats in her history when an army of some 40,000 soldiers was obliterated by the Visigoths at Adrianople. Augustine was twenty-four years old at the time. In 410, under their king Alaric I, the Visigoths sacked Rome: we have already seen something of the impact of this event on the perceptions of Augustine and his contemporaries. By 430, the Vandal king Gaiseric was in Africa with an army of 80,000 men. In May of that year, three months before Augustine's death, the Vandals began a fourteen month siege of Hippo itself. St Possidius, bishop of Calama, Augustine's intimate friend and earliest biographer, was with him at Hippo during his final illness. He reports of the Vandals that

> they destroyed whatever they could reach … they spared neither sex nor age nor even the priests and ministers of God, nor the ornaments and ves-

> sels of the churches, nor the buildings ... In the midst of these calamities [Augustine] would console himself with the words of a certain sage who said, 'No great man will think it a matter of importance when wood and stone fall and mortals die.'[2]

Even leaving aside the theological considerations that are always at the forefront Augustine's mind, it must have been easy in the empire of the late fourth and early fifth centuries to arrive at the view that he holds consistently: that armed struggle in one form or another is an inescapable feature of human life.

In dealing with war in its various manifestations, Augustine again tends to think in terms of the three interacting modes of explanation with which we are now familiar. War is a consequence and an occasion of sin; paradoxically, it is also a means of limiting or controlling the damage that arises from sin; and it is an instrument of Divine discipline. As in the two previous chapters, we shall examine each of these modes of explanation in turn. In doing so, we shall notice that Augustine's analysis of war exhibits a more pronounced ambivalence than he displays in relation to the State, private property and slavery. This ambivalence arises not because he is inconsistent or indecisive in his views, but because he is so much aware of the hopeless ambiguities with which war presents us. We shall consider also what he has to say about the relation between war and justice, and his reflections on the moral implications that military service has for the Christian soldier.

(a) The Nature of War

For Augustine, the universality of war is a fact of experience. Its universality, he insists, is related directly to the universality of human egoism. No matter how diverse their superficial causes may be, all wars happen in the final analysis for one reason. They happen because human beings are so much driven by the desire for mastery, with its accompaniments of riches, praise and renown. *Libido dominandi*, the lust for mastery, 'disturbs and consumes the human race

with frightful ills.'[3] Men almost always resort to arms either to achieve dominance over others or to beat off the attempts of others to achieve dominance over them.

So considered, war is the largest and most momentous of the ways in which our disordered love expresses itself. God's eternal law requires that everything be perfectly in order.[4] Good and holy love is ordinate love, and the proper order of love is love of God, love of self and love of neighbour as self.[5] But, as we know, mankind has chosen to pervert this order by assigning priority to self. The unregenerate have no 'neighbours' in the true sense. Each man loves only himself, and each seeks goods that are limited, self-centred and material. This generalization applies as much to relations between States as it does to relations between individuals. At all levels at which domination and subjection are possible, human beings seek to subdue others to themselves. The satisfaction that they derive from doing so is empty and short lived: even in our greatest moments of triumph we have to reflect that no triumph can last for ever; but this consideration only augments the misery of the human condition.[6] Nor is armed strife produced solely by the ambition of States to extend their possessions by foreign conquest. Men cannot be relied upon even to remain loyal to the group to which they belong. When they are not fighting with the people of other nations, they turn against their fellow citizens. As often as not, wars emerge from rivalries within a community, and are fought to bring about not territorial expansion, but internal redistributions of power. God created the human race from a single parent, intending in this way to show that we were made to treat one another as brothers. In practice, however, very little of our sense of kinship has survived the Fall.

In making observations of this sort, Augustine is representative of the tradition of thought that has come to be called political realism. Broadly speaking, we may regard this tradition as having been inaugurated in the fifth century BCE, by the 'radical' Sophists and the Athenian historian Thucydides.[7] From the perspective of politi-

cal realism, it is futile to try to understand political activity other than in terms of the play of force. What passes in the world for political morality is only a device by which dignity is lent to motives of individual and national self-interest. Augustine is a reluctant realist. He wishes that it were possible for people to live together in peace by the light of nature. He can never quite relinquish the hope that, in the right conditions, it might be possible for them to do so.[8] But he is a realist nonetheless. He thinks that, in practice, human relations are dominated by considerations of self-aggrandizement, power and security. Granted that a certain kind of 'justice' can emerge from conflict, it is still conflict. Augustine believes essentially what Machiavelli was to believe more than a millennium later. Machiavelli's 'theory' of human nature is entirely divested of religious associations, but, in fundamental respects, he and Augustine think in the same way.[9] They assume that, human nature being what it is, all men and all States are always actually or potentially at war with one another. Human beings fight not only from necessity, but also from an ambition that never allows them to rest content with what they have.

Again like Machiavelli, Augustine thinks that generalizations of this kind are supported by the evidence of history.[10] The chronicles of Rome disclose a long procession of foreign wars. It makes no difference that the Romans were often provoked into war by the need to repel attack from without. Motives of greed lie at the heart even of defensive wars: even people who do not wish to fight are compelled by the aggression of others to take up arms to protect themselves. In any case, Rome's wars were by no means all defensive ones. Her love of conquest showed itself from the first. Almost from the moment of her foundation she began to strive to dominate her neighbours: the abduction of the Sabine women is a disgraceful case in point.[11] Worse still, her history from the time of the Gracchi to the advent of Augustus was one of almost continual domestic strife. Civil war, which turns even members of the same household against each other, is one of the greatest calamities that can befall a com-

monwealth. 'What rage displayed by foreign nations, what ferocity of the barbarians, can match ... the cruelty displayed by Marius and Sulla and their partisans against men who were members of the same body as themselves?'[12] This calamity, moreover, the ineffectual gods of Rome had no power to avert.[13] After the suicide of the younger Gracchus in 121 BCE, the Romans erected a Temple of Concord on the site of the riots that accompanied his death. Much good it did them.[14]

But it is not only Roman history that provides illustrations of mankind's belligerence. War is contagious; those who profit by it set a course that others are only too ready to follow. According to the Roman historian Sallust, the earliest Romans were by temperament a peaceable and unambitious folk, content to live simply. They were incited to warlike deeds by the exploits of those who had gone before them: 'Cyrus in Asia and the Spartans and Athenians in Greece.' It was from these forerunners that the Romans learnt 'to subdue cities and nations, and to deem the lust for mastery a sufficient reason for war, and to hold that the greatest glory belongs to the greatest empire.'[15] The empires and individuals of the past whom we most admire are those who have been most successful in imposing their will on others by force. For one reason and another, the world has been at war since the earliest days of recorded history.[16] Men, impelled by greed, envy, hatred and, indeed, by genuine conviction, have always struggled to overcome one another, and there will be no end to this state of things for as long as the world lasts.[17]

> There are wars among the nations for kingship; there are wars among sects: among Jews, pagans, Christians, heretics, with some contending on the side of truth and some on that of falsehood. This is not yet fulfilled, then: 'He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.'[18] But there is no doubt that it will be fulfilled.[19]

There is no doubt that it will be fulfilled; but only when the history of this world is at an end. During that history, nothing could be

clearer than that one war creates only the conditions that produce another. Those who go to war in the expectation of bringing about the end of war are bound to be disappointed.

(b) War as Remedial and Disciplinary

As we might expect, however, Divine providence allows even war to have certain positive aspects. We can understand these aspects to some extent by reflecting on an important truth: that war is only the obverse of one of mankind's most prized treasures, peace. Sin produces only disorder and danger; yet it is, Augustine observes, a fact of nature that every creature, no matter how savage or solitary, wishes to achieve for itself an existence that is orderly and secure. Every creature desires and seeks some kind of peace, however transient or rudimentary.

> What tigress does nor purr softly over her cubs and lay her fierceness aside while she caresses them? What kite, solitary as he is while he hovers over his prey, does not take a mate, make a nest, help to hatch the eggs, rear the chicks, and preserve with the mother of his family as it were a domestic society that is as peaceful as he can make it?[20]

The instinct towards peace is as much present in man as it is in other animals. It is a vestige of the unimpaired nature that God created. All men want peace and need it, no matter how deficient their understanding of the true nature of peace may be. Fallen humanity 'hates the just peace of God, and ... loves its own unjust peace; but it cannot help loving peace of some kind or other.' In what may be an intentional echo of Plato, Augustine remarks that 'even robbers wish to have peace with their fellows, if only so that they may invade the peace of others with greater force and safety.'[21] Without peace, life would be intolerable for the strong and the weak alike. But it is largely through violence and the dread of violence that peace is maintained and the rule of law and order upheld. It is precisely to secure an advantageous peace for themselves that men go to war:

> It is ... with the desire for peace that wars are waged, even by those who love to exercise their warlike nature in command and battle. It is therefore obvious that the end sought for in war is peace; for everyone seeks peace by making war, but no one seeks war by making peace.[22]

It is by armed force that the rebellious and ambitious are kept in check by those more powerful than they. The restoration of stability to an unbalanced world is the redeeming feature of Rome's military expansion.[23] It is, we recall, largely for the sake of such a restoration that God allowed the Roman Empire to prosper so mightily.

It must, however, be conceded that the peace created and maintained by force or the threat of force is a tawdry sort of peace. It is, in Augustine's characteristic oxymoron, an unjust peace; but it is pointless to hope for anything better in this life. It goes without saying that earthly peace is not true or authentic peace. What we said in Chapter 2 about *vera iustitia* applies to *vera pax* also. True peace, like true justice, has the character of a Platonic 'idea'; it is capable of being established on earth only in the most incomplete and defective way. Peace in its most complete realization is 'the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God.'[24] True peace is found only in heaven because it expresses the kind of relationships that cannot exist in a fallen world. Its essence is the absence of strife, whereas earthly peace is nothing more than the suppression of present strife. It cannot be anything else, because it has to embrace within itself the behaviour of those who are estranged from God. Earthly peace is therefore a transient, unstable and largely unworthy state of affairs. Not only is it achieved and maintained by violence and fear; also, people for the most part desire it only because it allows them to pursue their own unrighteous purposes without hindrance.

On the one hand, then, those who seek true peace on earth are looking in the wrong place. 'There is no peace in this life. What we are seeking on earth has been promised in heaven; what we are seeking in this world has been promised in the world to come.'[25] On

the other hand, earthly peace is still peace after a fashion. As such, it is a kind of good, and it is through war and the wish to end or avoid war that it is most effectively secured.[26] In this sense, granted that it is a limited sense, war can be regarded as one of the palliatives or 'remedies' that God has provided for our condition. The expansion of the Roman Empire, though driven by self-serving motives, has brought contingent benefits to mankind. Rome's conquest of other nations has imposed at least a modicum of order and tranquillity upon the world.[27] Her military accomplishments have contributed to the creation of as much justice as human beings are capable of. The deeds of her great men, though worldly and self-centred in motive, have not been completely negative in outcome.[28]

Augustine is not, however, unequivocal in his admiration of earthly peace. To Augustine the Christian Platonist, no blessing in this life can be unmixed. Peace brings order and security, but it brings prosperity too, and with prosperity comes moral danger. Augustine has what one might call the typical intellectual's dislike of luxury. The observation that wealth induces selfish habits and undermines public spirit is certainly not peculiar to Christianity. Plato and Aristotle also deprecate excessive devotion to material things,[29] and the same attitude is present in Stoicism and the other moral schools that arose at the time of Alexander the Great.[30] But Augustine always commends indifference to possessions in terms coloured by the moral language of religion. As we saw in the previous chapter, he is very much alive to the spiritual perils to which material goods expose those who have them, even though he recognizes that such goods can be held without sin. To Augustine's mind, prosperity is more than a temporal hazard. When he is thinking about the connection between peace and luxury, he is even ready to praise war for the wholesome effect that it can have on the characters of those whom it forces to defend themselves. In some moods, he is prepared to argue that the stringencies and economies of war can preserve the morals of those threatened by it, or can at least protect those morals from too rapid a decline.

For Augustine, therefore, there is a sense in which armed struggle may have a remedial effect quite apart from the peace to which it can lead. His tendency is to regard the Romans of old, tempered by war and hardship, not as good, but at least as less bad than other pagans, and in certain ways as more admirable than some contemporary Christians.[31] The notable men of Rome exemplified the kind of stalwart republican virtue that Machiavelli also was to admire. Though not true virtue, Augustine concedes that it was virtue of a sort, and the Romans' addiction to fame and glory, though a vice, is by no means the worst of vices.[32] Mistaken as they were in what they regarded as worthy objects of service, they were in some respects good-hearted, and their commendable qualities showed themselves to best effect between the first and second Punic wars, when – albeit out of fear rather than genuine love of justice – 'the Romans displayed the highest morals and the greatest harmony.'[33] For as long as Rome lived under the threat of invasion by Carthage, her citizens were noted for their probity, austerity and courage.[34] When the Carthaginian menace was overcome, their morals began to deteriorate at once.

> For when Carthage was destroyed and the great terror of the Roman commonwealth thereby repulsed and extinguished, the prosperous condition of things immediately gave rise to great evils. Concord was corrupted and destroyed by fierce and cruel sedition; and then, by a series of evil causes, came the civil wars, which brought great slaughter, bloodshed, and a frenzy of cruel and greedy proscriptions and robberies. Thus, those Romans who, when life had possessed more innocence, feared only the evil deeds of their enemies, now, when the innocence of life was lost, suffered more cruelly at the hands of their fellow citizens.[35]

It is clear, then, that Augustine's feelings about war and peace are ambivalent. Given his perspective, it is inevitable that they should be. In war we have an exceptionally clear instance of the paradoxes that life in a fallen world generates. War only occurs at all because mankind is in thrall to sinful impulses: but through war

comes the peace without which life could not be conducted at all. War can make a people tough, austere and self-reliant: but the rewards that accompany success in war tend to undermine the very qualities that war encourages. Rome's triumphs on the field of battle were willed by God as part of her contribution to His plan for the world: but they were also in a direct sense her downfall. They took away the fear of external aggression and presented her with the precious bane of conquest. Those who had once lived frugal and upright lives now began to give themselves up to 'oriental luxury.'[36] Rome's achievement of military supremacy was accompanied by the corresponding slide into decadence that even her own chroniclers noted and deplored.

But warfare, like the other afflictions of this world, has a disciplinary function also. Here again, events that may seem to us random and senseless are in truth directed by God according to His inscrutable wisdom. 'When the human race is to be corrected and chastised by war, He governs the beginning, the course and the end of such war.'[37] As in the case of the State and private property, the disciplinary function of war has two aspects. On the one hand, the suffering and injustice that war produces are the deserved punishment of the unrighteous; on the other, these things fortify the faith of the righteous and train them in perseverance.[38] The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE was wicked and ungodly, yet the Romans were at the same time serving as the unwitting instruments by which punishment was visited upon the Jews.[39] The barbarian invasions of the empire are the just punishment of the wicked, but they are also a trial and test for the faithful, 'for the Divine providence often corrects and destroys the corrupt ways of men by wars, and tries the righteous and praiseworthy by such afflictions of this mortal life.'[40]

The punitive and disciplinary dimensions of war are only too plain. War gives rise to abominable suffering, much of it avoidable if men could only hold in check their love of glory.[41] The horrors that it inflicts are indiscriminate. Sometimes they come in fullest measure

to those who deserve them least. The bodies of saints and sinners alike lie unburied; holy women are often violated by the invading soldiery: some have killed themselves for shame.[42] Granted that there can be such a thing as a just cause – this is an issue to which we shall come in a moment – victory does not always go to it. At the individual level, war brings tribulation even to those who serve God. On a larger scale, history records calamities in comparison with which the events of the present day shrink into insignificance. When Hannibal destroyed the Roman army at Cannae in 216 BCE, the dead were too numerous to count.[43] Hannibal sent back to Carthage three large baskets of gold rings taken from the fingers of the slain. 'He did this in order to show that so many of Rome's finest had fallen in the battle that it was easier to grasp it by volume than by number.'[44] At *De civitate Dei* 3:20, Augustine dwells with pity and horror on the fate of the Spanish city of Saguntum, besieged by Hannibal in 219 BCE.[45] While the Romans hesitated and negotiated, the Saguntines were reduced by famine to eating the bodies of their dead. At last, rather than betray their alliance with Rome, the men of Saguntum 'publicly constructed an enormous funeral pyre and, having first slain their families with the sword, cast themselves into the flames, so that they might at least escape falling into the hands of Hannibal as prisoners.' The self-immolation of the Saguntines is another of those instances of pagan heroism for which Augustine cannot entirely conceal his admiration. Circumstances required them to make a choice between terrible death and dishonoured survival. The fact that war can create such awful dilemmas is part of its punitive quality.

(c) Just War

In dealing with the subject of war, and especially in wishing to censure the militarism of Rome, Augustine runs up against a problem similar to the one that we noticed in connection with property ownership: the apparently conflicting messages presented by the Scrip-

tures. On the one hand, the Old Testament is full of stories of battle and conquest. From the time of Moses onwards, the Israelites dealt in famously short order with those who stood in their path, and the Bible describes the most frightful massacres with jubilation. The great leaders of Israel – Moses, the Judges, Saul, David – are military chieftains. They pray for success in battle, and victory is the reward of their faith. Why, then, it seems fair to ask, is Rome to be condemned for wishing to extend her dominions? Were not the Children of Israel as bellicose and imperialist in their way as the Romans were? At one level, these questions find a ready answer. What distinguishes the mighty men of the Old Testament from the generals of Rome is that the successes of the former are evidence of Israel's status as God's chosen people. But the God of the Old Testament is nonetheless a jealous and belligerent God; sometimes He commands what look remarkably like atrocities.[46] The New Testament, on the other hand, counsels love, peace, submission, non-retaliation. This, we remember, is one of the reasons why Christianity was regarded with blame by traditionally-minded Romans at the time of the sack of 410. Christ says at Matthew 5:43–44: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.[47] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.' The Bible, it seems, both congratulates military success and condemns violence.

Given that the Scriptures cannot really contradict themselves, how are these antithetical signals to be reconciled? Augustine holds that, though all war is a dreadful affliction, not all wars are equally reprehensible. For him, as for Aristotle and Cicero before him, there is a difference between just and unjust war.[48] Most of the wars fought by men are anything but just; they are driven by greed and ambition only: but the distinction between righteous and unrighteous warfare is valid nonetheless. Christ counsels us to turn the other cheek,[49] but this does not mean that we are to be merely submissive and invertebrate.[50] It is sometimes necessary to incur the great evil

of war in order to avert a greater evil still. Military action undertaken in self defence, or in defence of the weak or oppressed, or to chastise wrongdoing, is regrettable, but it is justified. The Old Testament furnishes many examples of wars; but they are wars waged by the righteous to punish the unrighteous and enforce the just will of God. It may seem that many of the slaughters described in the Old Testament are acts of cruelty or aggression; but this is a mistake.

> When war is undertaken in obedience to God, Who wishes to rebuke or humble or crush the pride of man, we must grant that this is a just war ... It is, therefore, a mere groundless calumny to reproach Moses for waging war; for there would have been less harm in his waging war for purposes of his own than in not doing so when God commanded him.[51]

The wars that the Old Testament recounts are wars fought at God's command to deflate human pride and punish those who have transgressed the standards of earthly justice. More broadly, just wars are wars fought from a position of moral superiority.

Even if only in passing, we must notice the objections to which Augustine's argument is vulnerable. They are objections that, with modifications, arise in relation to just war theories generally. It might be pointed out that an appeal to moral superiority can in practice be used to justify any military intervention whatsoever. This fact is, one might think, subversive of any genuine distinction between just and unjust war. Ultimately, it all depends on who has the power to define what 'just' means: an observation that has, perhaps, become particularly relevant in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, when 'human rights' arguments have been put to uses that many have found questionable. This is not a difficulty that occurs to Augustine; nor could it, given the immovably religious standpoint from which he begins. Because he is not troubled by considerations of cultural or moral relativism, he does not address the problems that the distinction between just and unjust warfare now seems to us to involve. Also, because the Old Testament requires the conclusion that some wars have been fought simply because God commanded them,

Augustine does not recognize any difference between just war and holy war. War undertaken in response to a Divine command – a crusade, in other words – is by definition just. The modern reader is likely to want to take issue with Augustine on both these grounds; but to take such issue here would be to raise questions wider than we have space to consider. Also, it would require us to decontextualize Augustine's argument in a way that, from the point of view of the historian, is illicit. The most that we can say is that if Augustine is in truth a cultural imperialist, he is not consciously so. If he sins in this respect, at least he sins in distinguished company.

For Augustine, everything depends on the intention of those who wage war. He makes this point most clearly in arguing against the Manichaeans, who were especially inclined to reproach the apparent immoralities and cruelties of the Old Testament. In his anti-Manichaean treatise *Contra Faustum* he says:

> What is it that we blame in war? Is it the death of someone who will soon die in any case, so that those who are vanquished may live in peace? This is the complaint of timid men, not religious ones. The things to be blamed in war are love of violence, vengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, the lust for mastery, and similar things; and it is generally to punish such things, when force is required to inflict the punishment, that, in obedience to God or some lawful authority, good men undertake wars ... Otherwise, John, when the soldiers who came to be baptized asked, 'What shall we do?' would have answered: 'Throw your weapons away; desert your post; never strike or wound or injure anyone'[52] ... What matters greatly here are the motives for which men undertake wars and the authority that they have for doing so. For the natural order that seeks the peace of mortal men ordains that a prince should have the authority to wage war if he thinks fit, and that soldiers should perform their military duties for the sake of the common peace and safety.[53]

The purpose of just warfare, as sanctioned by God and nature alike, is not to seize territory or exact revenge. It is to punish the guilty and secure reparation for those who have suffered injury, thereby securing 'the peace of mortal men ... the common peace and safety.'

We notice too that war must be declared by 'some lawful authority.' The redress of merely private or factional grievances cannot be represented as just warfare. Augustine insists also that the motive for waging war should be that of loving correction rather than vengeance. Princes should regard their opponents not as enemies, but as children in need of paternal firmness.[54] Moreover, if the cause is just, the normal standards of moral conduct can rightly be suspended: it is legitimate to use such expedients as deceit or ambush to secure victory. In this respect, Augustine differs from Cicero;[55] but the Scriptures provide him with a suitable justification.

> God, speaking to Joshua,[56] commanded him to prepare an ambush behind the city: that is, to cause his troops to lie in wait for their enemies and take them by surprise; and we are assured by this instance that it is not unjust for those who wage just warfare to do this. For when just warfare has been undertaken, it does not matter from the point of view of justice whether one conquers in open battle or by means of trickery.[57]

Wars of aggression – wars that have nothing more than the subjugation of others as their objective – are never justified, and the good ruler will not engage in them. He will willingly engage in righteous warfare: in wars that are just because punitive or defensive or because undertaken in the cause of peace or in obedience to a Divine command. Nonetheless, he will regret having to do even this. He will seek to conclude such wars with a merciful and honourable peace, and he will not require the defeated to make excessive reparations. The fact always remains that even just wars are hideous, and the ruler who averts armed conflict by diplomacy is more deserving of praise than even the bravest warrior. 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.'[58]

(c) The Christian Soldier

Though all war is terrible, Augustine thinks that some comfort is to be found in the reflection that the coming of Christianity has to an extent lessened its horrors. In the lengthy discussion of the sack of

410 with which he begins *De civitate Dei*, he applauds the relative leniency with which the Visigoths, who were Christians, albeit Arians, had treated the people of Rome.[59] One's impression is that he is trying to build an argument on foundations that are not very solid; but he observes especially that Alaric's soldiers abstained from molesting Christians who fled to the churches for shelter. Indeed, they encouraged them to take shelter there (it is, Augustine comments ironically, remarkable how many people suddenly discovered that they were Christians). On the whole, the behaviour of the Visigoths compared favourably with the more normal practices of military conquerors; and for this, as for all benefits, we must give thanks to God.[60] Although Augustine regards the sack of Rome as a punishment for Rome's wickedness, he does not in so many words say that it was a case of just warfare. He does, however, think that war waged by Christians is likely to be less merciless than pagan warfare can be.

But does not the very idea of war waged by Christians present us with a difficulty? We may not doubt that the wars of the Old Testament were righteous wars; nor, however, is there any getting away from the fact that under the new dispensation of Christ we are enjoined unconditionally to eschew conflict. We are taught not to resist evil, to requite evil with good, to love our enemies. We must not retaliate when we are struck; we must not even seek the protection of the law against those who do us wrong.[61] An intractable question therefore arises: how can the soldier who is also a Christian reconcile the demands of his profession with his duty not to harm his fellow men, or even to defend himself against them? And if he cannot, then an awkward conclusion surely follows: that, in the Christian era at least, there can be no such thing as a just war after all.

This question had been a problem of long standing in the Church. It was topical from very early days because so many of the earliest converts to Christianity were soldiers in the Roman legions, and naturally sought the advice of their teachers as to what they should do. To earlier generations of Christian teachers – Clement of

Alexandria, Tertullian, Lactantius, Origen – the Scriptures leave no room for doubt. Words are the only weapons that the Christian is permitted to wield.[62] 'Is it to be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword,' Tertullian asks rhetorically, 'when the Lord declares that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword?[63] And shall the son of peace take part in battle when it does not become him even to bring an action at law?'[64] On this interpretation, pacifism is the only position consistent with the teaching of Christ; the military profession is not compatible with the gospel. The idea of a Christian soldier is a contradiction in terms, and there can be no question of a distinction between just and unjust warfare. If violence is explicitly prohibited by the Lord, it can make no sense to the believer to describe any act of violence as just. In any case, says Origen, Christians who pray for the emperor help him far more effectively than do soldiers who go into battle and slay the enemy.[65]

According to this older view, therefore, the Christian should abstain from acting in any capacity that might implicate him in bloodshed. Acknowledgement of Christ's Divinity requires the soldier to lay down his arms; indeed, he must do so if he wishes to remain a member of the Church. In the early third century, St Hippolytus of Rome says: 'If anyone under instruction, or a baptized Christian, wishes to become a soldier, let him be cast out, for he is in contempt of God.'[66] Conscientious objection was moreover supported by distinguished examples. In 295, St Maximilian of Tebessa was martyred under the emperor Diocletian because, having been conscripted into the army, he refused to fight. 'I will not serve. Cut off my head, but I will not be a soldier of this world, for I am a soldier of Christ. My army is the army of God, and I cannot fight for this world.'[67] As in the case of literal poverty, however, the initial position of the Church called for revision in a world that showed no sign of ending. In 314, the Council of Arles convoked under the Christian emperor Constantine provided the first stimulus to Christian just war theories. The emperor pointed to a regrettable but inescapable truth: that to refuse to defend the commonwealth is

effectively to condemn the commonwealth to extinction. Accordingly, the Council had condemned soldiers who declined to fight because of religious scruples.[68]

But such scruples were not easily overcome. In about 330, St Martin of Tours refused to fight or accept wages as a soldier. Taunted with cowardice, he volunteered to stand naked and without weapons in the front line of battle.[69] A century after the Council of Arles, Augustine thinks it still necessary to develop an argument rehabilitating military service from the Christian point of view. Service under arms is not, he holds, objectionable in itself; the Scriptures show us as much. King David was a mighty warrior; nor is the distinction between the Old and New Testaments pertinent here: John the Baptist did not tell those soldiers who came to him for baptism to give up being soldiers; Christ Himself thought well of the centurion who acknowledged Him. The fact that Christ willingly paid the taxes by which the Roman army was maintained shows that He was not opposed to warfare.[70] By way of elaborating the lessons of Scripture, Augustine appeals to the same ethical principle that we noted in connection with his view of property ownership: that the moral quality of an action depends not on appearances but on the state of mind in which the agent acts. In the context of military service, this principle is associated with Augustine's broader conviction that the faithful are obliged in almost all cases to obey the commands even of wicked superiors (see pp. 74–81). It enables him to argue that an agent is not necessarily required to take personal responsibility for acts of a public or an official nature. If the soldier acts in a scrupulously professional fashion – if he fights without allowing the motives and intentions that might belong to him as an individual to intrude into his public role – no blame attaches to him. If he sheds blood without passion or anger or personal involvement but simply in the course of duty, he is as it were an instrument in the hands of his commander.[71] It is not quite that his actions are not moral actions; there may indeed be blame: but it is not he who bears it. Moral responsibility for what he does rests with the superior who com-

manded him to do it. The soldier's duty is to obey the orders given to him without question or reflection.[72]

In short, Augustine wishes us to accept that individual acts are capable of being performed under two modalities that are in principle entirely separate. We might call these modalities public and private, or official and personal. It is possible for the soldier *qua* soldier to do without fault things that are forbidden to him *qua* Christian. He can slay dispassionately, and therefore blamelessly, by isolating his private conscience as a Christian from his public acts as an instrument of State. This argument will no doubt strike the twenty-first century reader as perilous and unsatisfactory. It is, one might object, implausible even on Augustine's own premisses. If Christ forbids us to fight, then is not an instruction to do so directly contrary to a Divine command and therefore not binding upon the faithful (see pp. 76–77)? Especially in view of the appalling acts that technology now allows even quite insignificant people to commit, the kind of justification that Augustine favours has in recent times come to seem particularly obnoxious. With hindsight it may be thought unfortunate that it should have been developed as part of a Christian theory of ethical warfare.[73] Rightly or wrongly, however, Augustine's view is that the soldier who, acting from no motive of his own, commits 'atrocities' under orders is relieved of moral complicity in them.

* * * * *

For Augustine, war is a peculiarly vivid and horrible feature of the penal condition under which man must live. It is simultaneously inevitable and lamentable; in some respects, it is even beneficial: but there is no glory in war, and success in it can never be an occasion for rejoicing. In supposing otherwise, the Romans were both mistaken and sinful. There is a human family, united by a natural bond; but, in practice, the self-interest and restricted vision of its members estranges them from one another. Anyone who examines the history

of the world will see the same thing always and everywhere. Domestically and internationally, war and struggle are the normal condition of human affairs. Human beings engage in ceaseless efforts to achieve mastery and security for themselves at the expense of others. In its essence, all war is an unnatural affront to a familial bond. It is conflict between those who, as children of God, ought to regard one another as brethren. There is a distinction between just and unjust warfare, but such a distinction is necessary and intelligible only because even those capable of righteous action are obliged to repulse the aggression and punish the misdeeds of those who are not. In a world made paradoxical and incoherent by sin, God permits war, makes use of it for His own purposes, and in some circumstances even commands it, though His will has not created it. To that extent, even war is not without its redeeming features. Granted that, judged by eternal standards, the peace and order of this world are paltry and evanescent, war is nonetheless one of the instrumentalities through which they are secured; it chastises the sinner and strengthens the righteous: yet it is one of the most terrible evils to which we are exposed. In this life, even the good are constrained to do harm. The Christian soldier must hurt even those whom he is obliged to love, and does not necessarily incur blame in doing so. Often, he must set aside his own conscience and execute the orders of superiors who are wicked. With respect to war, as in so many other ways, the earthly predicament of mankind is a tragic one.

NOTES

1. See Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 7 vols., trans. H. B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA, and London: Loeb Classical Library, repr. 1953-54); also P.S. Barnwell, *Emperor, Prefects and Kings: The Roman West, 395–565* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); *The Rise of Western Christendom. Triumph and Diversity 200-1000 AD* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2002); A. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1993); A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964); *The Decline of the Ancient World* (London: Longman, 1975); M. Grant, *The Fall of the Ro-*

man Empire: a Reappraisal (London: Nelson, 1976); J. Wallace Hadrill, *The Barbarian West, 400–1000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985). Old but still of value are J.B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1889) and S. Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1898; repr. 1933).

2. Possidius of Calama, *Sancti Augustini vita*, ed. H.T. Weiskotten (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1919), p. 28.
3. *De civitate Dei* 3:14.
4. *De libero arbitrio* 1:6:15:51.
5. See *De doctrina Christiana* 1:27:28; *De civitate Dei* 15:22; *De libero arbitrio* 1:6:15; *Epistulae* 137:5:17; *De moribus ecclesiae* 1:25:46.
6. *De civitate Dei* 15:4.
7. On this subject see especially Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, Preface and chs 1 and 6. See also p. 65, above.
8. Cf. *De civitate Dei* 2:19: 'If "the kings of the earth and all nations, princes and all the judges of the earth, young men and maidens, old men and children" [Psalm 148:11–12] ... were to hear and embrace the Christian precepts of justice and moral virtue, then would the commonwealth adorn its lands with happiness in this present life and ascend to the summit of life eternal, there to reign in utmost blessedness.' But, Augustine goes on: 'As it is, however, one man listens while another condemns, and more are lovers of the evil blandishments of vice than of austere virtue. Christ's servants, therefore, be they kings or princes or judges, soldiers or provincials, rich men or poor, free or slaves ... are commanded to endure this earthly commonwealth, however depraved and wholly vile it may be, if they must.'
9. The 'parallels' between Augustine and Machiavelli must not, of course, be overstated, but Machiavelli does have some strikingly 'Augustinian' passages; for instance:

   > One can make this generalization about men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, liars and deceivers; they shun danger and are greedy for profit; while you treat them well they are yours … but as soon as you are in danger they betray you (*The Prince* 17).

   > All men are bad, and ready to display their vicious nature whenever they find an opportunity to so do. If their evil disposition remains for the time being concealed, this must be attributed to some unknown reason, and we must assume that it has lacked occasion to show itself;

but time, which has been called the father of all truth, does not fail to bring it to light (*Discourses* 1:3).

10. See Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 8.
11. *De civitate Dei* 3:13–14, 18–20; 5:12, 17.
12. *De civitate Dei* 3:29.
13. *De civitate Dei* 3:23–30.
14. *De civitate Dei* 3:25.
15. *De civitate Dei* 3:14.
16. *De civitate Dei* 4:6.
17. *De civitate Dei* 17:12–13; *Enarrationes in psalmos* 45:13; 48:2:6; 84:10.
18. Psalm 46:9.
19. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 45:13.
20. *De civitate Dei* 19:12.
21. Ibid.; cf Plato, *Republic* 351C: 'Would you, I [Socrates] said, be good enough to tell me also whether you think that a city or an army or a band of robbers and thieves, or any other gang of evildoers, could act at all if they injured one another? No, he [Thrasymachus] replied, of course they could not.'
22. *De civitate Dei* 19:12.
23. *De Genesi ad litteram* 9:9; *Epistulae* 153:6:16; *De libero arbitrio* 1:15:32–33; *Sermo* 125:5; *De ordine* 2:4:12.
24. *De civitate Dei* 19:17.
25. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 48:3:6.
26. *De civitate Dei* 15:14; 19:12; *Epistulae* 189:6.
27. *De civitate Dei* 3:10; 5:12, 17.
28. *De civitate Dei* 5:18.
29. See Socrates's remarks about the 'first' city at *Republic* 372E–373A: a community whose citizens work hard and live together simply. 'In my view, the true and healthy constitution of the city is the one that I have described.' A more elaborate and luxurious arrangement is 'a city heated with fever.' See also Aristotle's comment at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1179^{a}4: 'Self-sufficiency and [virtuous] activity do not require excess, and we can perform noble acts without ruling earth and sea; for one can act virtuously even with moderate advantages ... Solon too perhaps gave a good account of the happy man when he described him [see Herodotus 1:30] as being modestly supplied

with external goods but as having done ... the most noble acts and lived frugally.'

30. See Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol 1, ch. 4.
31. Cf. *De civitate Dei* 5:18: 'How will a Christian dare to praise himself for the voluntary poverty that enables him to walk more lightly, during the pilgrimage of this life, on that path which leads to the country where God Himself is the true riches ... when he hears or reads of Lucius Valerius, who died while holding the office of consul, and who was so poor that the money to pay for his funeral had to be collected from the people? Or ... of Quintius Cincinnatus, who owned only four *iugera* of land, which he was tilling with his own hands when he was summoned from the plough and made dictator?'
32. *De civitate Dei* 5:12, 18.
33. *De civitate Dei* 2:18.
34. *De civitate Dei* 2:2–18.
35. *De civitate Dei* 1:30.
36. *De civitate Dei* 3:21.
37. *De civitate Dei* 7:30.
38. *De civitate Dei* 1:9.
39. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 73:7–8; cf. Josephus, *Bella Iudaica* 6:5:1.
40. *De civitate Dei* 1:1.
41. *De civitate Dei* 3:14, 18; 5:12, 17.
42. *De civitate Dei* 1:12–18.
43. Livy 23:22.
44. *De civitate Dei* 3:19.
45. Livy 21:2.
46. See, e.g., I Samuel 15:3, 33: 'Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass ... And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.' We note that King Saul was deposed by Samuel precisely because he did *not* commit an 'atrocity.'
47. Cf. Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 23:6.
48. See Aristotle, *Politics* 1256^{b}25; Cicero, *De officiis* 1:11–13.
49. Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:29.

50. Cf. *Epistulae* 138:2:13: 'The Lord Jesus Himself, the outstanding example of patience, when He was struck on the face, replied [at John 18:23]: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if not, why smitest thou me?" If we attend only to the words, He did not here fulfil His own precept, for He did not offer the other side of His face to him who had struck Him, but, on the contrary, prevented him who had done wrong from adding to it ... In this way He demonstrated to us that these precepts relate rather to the inward disposition of the mind than to actions done in the sight of men, requiring us, in our inmost heart, to cherish patience along with benevolence, but in our outward action to do that which seems most likely to benefit those whose good we ought to seek.'
51. *Contra Faustum* 22:75, 78.
52. Cf. Luke 3:14.
53. *Contra Faustum* 22:74–77.
54. *Epistulae* 138:2:14.
55. Cf. *De officiis* 1:13.
56. Joshua 8:1–23.
57. *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 6:10.
58. *Epistulae* 229:2, quoting Matthew 5:9.
59. *De civitate Dei* 1:1–7.
60. The mercy shown by the Visigoths to those who fled to Christian places of worship is mentioned also by Orosius (*Historia adversus paganos* 7:39) and Jerome (*Epistulae* 27:13). The contrast is not as clear as Augustine invites us to think. There are pagan instances of deference to religion that he does not mention, and of which he is possibly not aware. After the seige of Tyre in 332 BCE, Alexander spared those who had fled to the temple of Hercules (Arrian, *Anabasis* 7:24); after the battle of Coronea (394 BCE), Agesilaus showed the same consideration to the Theban hoplites who took shelter in the temple of Itonian Athene (Plutarch, *Agesilaus* 19).
61. Matthew 5:40: 'And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also'; I Corinthians 6:7: 'Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law with one another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?'
62. See R.H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960); C.J. Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War*

(London: Headly Brothers, 1919); J. Driver, *How Christians Made Peace With War: Early Christian Understandings of War* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988); A. Harnack, *Militia Christi: the Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, repr. 1981); J.M. Hornus, *It Is Not Lawful for Me to Fight: Early Christian Attitudes Toward War, Violence, and the State* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980); L.J. Swift, *The Early Fathers on War and Military Service* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983). See also D. Lenihan, "The Just War Theory in the Works of Saint Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 19 (1988).

63. Matthew 26:52.

64. *De corona militis* 11; see also Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 6:20: 'When God forbids us to kill, He not only prohibits us from open violence, which is not allowed by the public laws either, but He admonishes us also against those things that are deemed lawful among men. Thus it will not be lawful for a righteous man to engage in warfare ... nor to accuse any one of a capital charge, because it makes no difference whether you put a man to death by a word or by the sword, since what is forbidden is the act of putting to death. There ought therefore to be no exception at all to this precept of God, because it is always unlawful to put to death a man whom God has willed to be a sacred creature.'

65. *Contra Celsum* 8:73; cf. I. Timothy 2:1–2.

66. G. Dix, *The Treatise on The Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome*, 3rd ed., rev. (London: Alban Press, 1937), pp. 26–7.

67. See A.A.R. Bastiaensen et al. (eds), *Atti e Passioni dei Martiri* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1987); P. Brock, 'Why did St. Maximilian Refuse to Serve in the Roman Army?' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994).

68. J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Venice 1759–98) II, 463. It should be pointed out also that the conversion of Constantine had removed one of the traditional obstacles to Christian military service: the fact that, under the pagan emperors, Christian soldiers were required to participate in idolatrous acts of emperor-worship.

69. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita*, ed. K. Halm, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 1 (Vienna, 1866), p. 4.

70. *Epistulae* 189:4; *Contra Faustum* 22:74.

71. See especially *De civitate Dei* 1:21, 26: 'But the Divine authority itself has made certain exceptions to the rule that it is not lawful to kill men. These exceptions, however, include only those whom God commands to be slain,

either by a general law, or by an express command applying to a particular person at a particular time. Moreover, he who is commanded to perform this ministry does not himself slay. Rather, he is like a sword which is the instrument of its user ... [W]hen the soldier, obedient to the power under which he has been lawfully placed, slays a man, he is not guilty of murder according to any laws of his city. On the contrary, if he does not do so, he is guilty of desertion and contempt of authority. If he had done this of his own will and authority ... he would have fallen into the crime of shedding human blood. Thus, the deed that is punished if he does it when not commanded is the same as that for which he will be punished if he does not do it when commanded.' Cf. *Epistulae* 47:5; 138:2:13; *Contra Faustum* 22:75.

72. The argument that an agent may as an instrument of authority perform acts that would be forbidden to him as a private individual recurs in the *Policraticus* of the twelfth-century English author John of Salisbury, during his discussion of why the prince, though *legibus solutus*, should voluntarily submit himself to the law. It is his willing subordination of his personal acts and intentions to the sovereignty of the law that makes it legitimate for the prince to do what would otherwise be acts of criminal violence.

> Therefore it is not without reason that he bears the sword with which he sheds blood innocently, without thereby becoming a man of blood, and often puts men to death without incurring the guilt of homicide (*Policraticus* 4:2: for bibliographical details see p. 175, n. 32).

The prince 'sheds blood innocently' precisely because, in acting against offenders, he does not wield his sword with any passion or motive of his own to which blame might attach.

73. On this aspect of the matter see Dyson, *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, pp. 187–188. By way of illustration: on 15 January, 2005, an American soldier was sentenced by a military tribunal to ten years' imprisonment for abusing Iraqi detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, contrary to the Geneva Convention. His defence, that he was carrying out the orders of his superiors, was not accepted. It is, perhaps, pertinent to add that the superiors were neither named nor tried. Many similar examples could be given from recent history. No particular instance remains topical for long; but this does not detract from the point that the issue of responsibility for acts done by soldiers under orders is a persistent and troublesome one.

Chapter 5

Church and State

Not the least of the reasons why Augustine is of interest to the historian of political thought is the part that 'Augustinianism' came to play in medieval debates about Church and State. Thanks to the insistence of medieval authors that secular rule can and should be conducted according to universal spiritual imperatives, Augustine's political realism – the suggestion that politics is only a matter of self-interest, power and security – is not a prominent feature of medieval thought. But this insistence is itself due, in part at least, to Augustine's influence in creating such a close nexus between religious obligation and the duties of rulers and subjects. We shall here consider one aspect of this nexus in particular: the contribution that Augustinian ideas made to the emergence of the 'high' medieval theory of papal monarchy or papal theocracy.[1] This is by no means the whole story of Augustine's influence on medieval views about the relation between religion and government; but, in terms of its impact on the logic and character of political controversy, it is without doubt the most important part of it.

Selective and tendentious as their reception of him certainly was, the papal publicists of the Middle Ages held Augustine in the highest esteem. Even where they do not refer to him directly, their arguments rely to a considerable extent on themes and patterns of thought clearly associated with him.[2] In referring to the contrast between spiritual and temporal ends, the Church's spokesmen are inclined to interpret Augustine's idea of the two *civitates* in a highly specific fashion. They tend to regard the *civitas Dei* in its earthly di-

mension as being exemplified in the authority and mechanisms of the Roman Church. By the same token, secular political arrangements are identified with the earthly dimension of the *civitas terrena*. Such arrangements are ordained of God, indeed, but they are dedicated to ends that are temporal and inferior. Some ecclesiastical theorists give special emphasis to the point that earthly government originated in, and continues to express, squalid and self-serving impulses. The standard example of this occurs in the long letter written by Pope Gregory VII to Bishop Hermann of Metz in March, 1081, during the pope's great controversy with the emperor Henry IV over lay investiture.[3]

> Is not a sovereignty devised by men of this world who were ignorant of God subject to that which the providence of Almighty God established for His own glory and graciously bestowed upon the world? ... Who does not know that kings and princes derive their origin from men ignorant of God who raised themselves up above their fellows by pride, plunder, treachery, murder – in short, by every kind of crime – at the instigation of the devil, the prince of this world: men blind with greed and intolerable in their audacity?

Gregory does not mention Augustine by name, but his words illustrate a habit of mind that is unmistakably 'Augustinian.' The sovereignty of the Church reflects the glory and grace of God; the kingdoms of this world are the results of greed and audacity.

These disjunctions, augmented by appeals to Scripture and other authorities, make possible an argument that, for as long as its premisses are accepted, is unanswerable. On the one hand, if the institutional Church is, in effect, the City of God on earth, and if justice cannot exist other than in the City of God – 'in that commonwealth whose Founder and Ruler is Christ' – then justice cannot exist on earth other than in and through the institutional Church. On the other hand, if, of itself, political activity is at best ignoble and at worst greedy and sinful, it follows that such activity can be redeemed from baseness only if its exponents are guided by a hand

purer and more worthy than their own. The political community can become a moral community, a community in which justice is present; but it can do so only through submission to the authority of the visible Church: an authority not subject to the deficiencies that infect the institutions created by fallen men.[4]

This argument can be made the basis of any or all of the following claims: that all political authority flows from the Church or is conditional upon her validation; that secular princes are in every respect subject to the Church's supervision and command; and even that princes can be deposed by the Church if they misconduct themselves.[5] The most ambitious papalist authors of the Middle Ages – Giles of Rome is the outstanding case in point – canvassed beliefs of precisely this kind.[6] They cited Augustine as one of the main supporting authorities of what has become known as the 'hierocratic' ideology of the medieval papacy: the claim that the pope, as head of Christ's Church on earth, is *de iure* the ruler of the entire world, with *plenitudo potestatis*, 'fullness of power,' in spiritual and temporal things alike. According to this doctrine, the pope, as *vicarius Christi*, 'vicar' of Christ – this papal title was coined by the great thirteenth-century pontiff Innocent III – stands alone and supreme at the head of the earthly hierarchy of powers. He is 'that spiritual man who judges all things and can himself be judged by no one.'[7] As such, he can take cognizance of any case whatsoever, regardless of whether the question at issue is temporal or spiritual. He can appoint, direct and punish kings and emperors. He can depose them by absolving subjects from their oath of allegiance. He can intervene in all disputes, whether domestic or international. He can confiscate the property of sinners and transfer it to the hands of the righteous. *Plenitudo potestatis* is the power to do everything. The pope can do whatever he thinks fit in caring for the flock that Christ has entrusted to him. From him there is no appeal because there is no higher authority in this world to which appeal might be made.

These remarkable conclusions emerged gradually, but in a discernible process of development, during the course of several major

confrontations between the Church and secular princes. In the course of these confrontations, popes and papal publicists called upon every resource of argument to assert, first, the Church's independence of secular control and, increasingly, her supremacy over all temporal powers.[8] The most important milestones in this process are the pontificates of Gelasius I (492–496), Gregory VII (1073–1085), Innocent III (1198–1216) and Boniface VIII (1294–1303). Its culmination, perhaps, is Boniface VIII's famous Bull *Unam sanctam*, promulgated in 1302, at the height of his epochal confrontation with Philip IV of France: 'We declare, state, define and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.'[9]

It seems incontestable that assertions of this kind express a view that is in an intelligible sense 'Augustinian.' But how far do the writings of Augustine actually lend themselves to such assertions? In view of the powerful force that medieval 'political Augustinianism'[10] was to become, it is important that we try to understand what Augustine himself says about the relative functions of temporal and spiritual power. In this chapter, we shall attempt to distinguish what he said from what his medieval admirers thought he said, or thought he ought to have said. We shall try also to identify the elements of his thought that made it possible for later generations to derive from it the conclusions that they did. In doing these things, we shall elucidate also Augustine's remarks about religious persecution, and we shall show something of the changes that his thinking on this subject underwent.

(a) The 'Problem' of Two Powers

The medieval 'problem' of Church and State – more strictly, the question of how the relation between two kinds or orders of power, spiritual and temporal, is properly to be conceived[11] – has deep historical roots. These roots lie in the Christianization of the Roman Empire set in motion by the conversion of Constantine in 312. This

Christianization proved to be in some ways a mixed blessing. As we have seen, Christianity was by the end of the fourth century no longer a persecuted sect struggling to assert itself within an unfriendly classical culture. The Church and her officials had begun to emerge into a position of prominence and esteem. But this reversal of fortune raised an issue the complications of which were to ramify for a millennium. The nub of the matter is a consideration that we touched upon earlier (see p. 57). The Church of Christ now seemed to owe not, indeed, her existence, but certainly her position as the 'established' church of the Roman Empire, with all the privilege and importance belonging to that position, to the favour of the Roman State. The triumph of Christ had in a measurable sense been effected not by a spiritual transformation of the world, but by secular legislation.

Acceptance and respectability therefore came at a price. That price was a pronounced ambiguity as to the standing of the Church in relation to the pre-existing institutions of power. This ambiguity was apparent from the first, though it was not at first perceived as a serious problem. It was an assumption of Constantine and his immediate Christian successors that the government of ecclesiastical affairs lay as much within their province as sovereign rulers as everything else. The role of the pagan emperors had always included the control not only of secular government and law, but also, in the emperor's capacity as *pontifex maximus*, of the *ius in sacris*: the law relating to sacred and religious matters. The doctrine that the emperor is head of both Church and State – is, in the term then favoured, παντοκράτωρ (*pantokrator*, 'all-sovereign ruler') – thus established itself naturally in the minds of the first Christian emperors.[12] It is customary to refer to this doctrine of imperial sovereignty over both 'Church' and 'State' as 'caesaropapism.'[13] It was a doctrine not weakened by the readiness of Christians themselves to appeal to the secular authorities for help in adjudicating internal disputes and settling quarrels. This practice had begun, in connection with the Donatist controversy, no more than a year after the conversion of

Constantine. It tended to reinforce the view that the Church is in some sense dependent upon the judgements of secular rulers. In his hagiographical *Vita Constantini*, written in about 340, the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius of Caesarea reports that, speaking to an audience of bishops whom he was entertaining as guests, Constantine declared that he was just as much a bishop as they, entrusted by God with the oversight of the external – that is, the legal, financial and administrative – business of the Church.[14]

Despite his readiness to acknowledge himself subject to the bishops in spiritual matters,[15] the emperor did not in fact confine himself to temporalities. In 325 the bishops of the Church assembled at Nicaea to resolve the Arian controversy.[16] Their primary purpose was to discuss a recondite matter of theology: the metaphysical relation of God the Father and God the Son. Here, one would have thought, was something over which the emperor, as ruling externals, would have no authority. Yet Constantine presided over the Council as though it were a session of the Senate, sanctioned the formulation of the Nicene Creed, and in person proposed (though no doubt with suitable advice from the assembled theological experts) the term ὁμοούσιος (*homoousios*: 'consubstantial') as a solution to the problem of Christ's divinity. He also caused those who would not subscribe to the Council's decisions to be treated not as dissenters simply, but as criminals.[17] The Council of Nicaea provides a very clear example of the way in which the distinction between the law of the State and the theological prescriptions of the Church became blurred at an early stage.

(b) Augustine's Dualism and its Implications

The Christianization of the empire thus introduced into the agenda of political theory some delicate matters of principle. This was particularly true in the Western Church, with its emergent doctrine of papal, as distinct from imperial, primacy. On the one hand, how can the Church of Christ, the mediatrix of God's grace on earth, ac-

knowledge herself to be an organ of the secular State? In what way can she confess herself subject to the government of lay princes? On the other hand, how can Christian emperors – lords of the civilized word, as they still perceived themselves, yet now also disciples of Christ – be expected to regard themselves as in some sense 'subjects' of the Church? Here are the late-classical roots of the medieval problem of *regnum* or *imperium* and *sacerdotium*, of kingship or empire and priesthood. Given that, with the coming of the Church, there are now two kinds of power in the world, how are their respective provinces to be defined? How are the functions of princes and priests to be balanced and reconciled? More than anything else, how can the Church call upon the secular authorities for material support while remaining free to manage her own affairs and decide purely doctrinal issues without interference? These were some of the most burning questions of medieval political controversy.

In view of these ambiguities, the Church, or at least the Latin Church, found it necessary at an early stage to attempt a definition in precise terms of the distinction between spiritual and secular jurisdictions. Augustine is not the first Patristic author to address this distinction,[18] but his were the views to which the greatest weight was attached by subsequent generations. As usual, an examination of these views encounters difficulties associated with the fact that so much of what Augustine says about political matters is said incidentally, during discussions of other subjects. As Professor Deane notes, Augustine 'developed no detailed, systematic theory of the proper relationship between Church and State or of the way in which their respective spheres of activity should be marked off.'[19] This is so, of course, precisely because his concerns are not 'theoretical.' The inferences that medieval authors derived from Augustine's ideas are drawn from statements made in response to the various events of his pastoral life: statements that he himself did not intend, or did not necessarily intend, to bear the constructions later attached to them. The following paragraphs provide an account of his thought insofar

as it is capable of being summarised. They will serve also to show the fertile ambivalences that that thought contains.

The view presupposed in most of what Augustine has to say is a dualism that may appropriately be called the 'Augustinian/Gelasian principle.' This expression is appropriate because it makes the point that Augustine is effectively the originator of the view that historians more usually associate with Pope Gelasius I.[20] Augustine's fundamental position is that Church and State are in principle completely separate orders. They are orders distinguishable from one another in terms of clearly specifiable functions.[21] There is on this view no 'problem' of Church and State because there is no reason for their respective jurisdictions to come into conflict. The distinction is on the face of it clear: the State is Divinely appointed to deal with temporal matters, the Church with spiritual ones. Proper recognition should be given by each to each, and there is no need for either to intrude into the province of the other. Commenting on Chapter 13 of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Augustine says:

> We are composed of body and soul. For as long as we are in this temporal life, we use temporal things for the support of this life. With respect to that part of us which pertains to this life, it is fitting that we be subject to the powers: that is, to the men who administer human affairs in some office of honour. But with respect to that part of us by which we believe in God and are called to His kingdom, it is not fitting for us to be subject to any man who seeks to subvert in us that very gift which God has deigned to give us for the attainment of eternal life. If, therefore, anyone supposes that, because he is a Christian, he does not have a duty to pay taxes or tribute, or that he does not have to render due honour to the powers that deal with such things, he falls into a great error. But if anyone supposes that he should be subject to a man who is raised up to some high position in the administration of temporal affairs in such a way that that man is deemed to have power even over his faith, he falls into an even greater error.[22]

Writing in about 412 to Apringius, proconsul of Africa, Augustine speaks in a similar sense:

> I do not doubt that when you exercise that power which God has given to you as a man over men, you keep in mind the Divine judgement seat before which even judges will have to stand and render an account of their judgements ... It is of you that the Apostle said, as we read, that you bear not the sword in vain and that you are 'a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.'[23] But it is one thing to rule a province and another to rule the Church. The former must be administered by engendering fear; the latter must gently commend herself through mildness.[24]

The secular and spiritual powers are ordained to preside respectively over the two parts of which man is composed, and each part requires as it were different methods of rule. For the reasons that we have examined, the governance of the exterior life of man requires force and fear; but the governance of the soul requires gentleness. In view of the verbal similarities that the two documents exhibit, we are fairly safe in assuming that Gelasius I had Augustine's letter to Apringius before him, or at least had it in mind, when in 494 he wrote his famous letter to the emperor Anastasius II:

> There are two orders, O August Emperor, by which this world is principally ruled: the consecrated authority of the pontiffs, and royal power. But the burden laid upon the priests in this matter is the heavier, for it is they who are to render an account at the Divine judgement even for the kings of men.[25]

Like so many Christian authors who call attention to it, Augustine attributes the separateness of secular and spiritual jurisdictions to Christ's answer, at Matthew 22:21, to those who were trying to compromise Him: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'

What are the implications of this dualism, both for Augustine and for subsequent political argument? On the one hand, Augustine himself is content to speak of the relation between spiritual and secular authority as if it were one of separate but equal partnership. He does not at all concern himself with the problem that, in later

times, would present itself repeatedly as a focus of dispute: that of how inexact the boundary between spiritual and temporal matters really is. When he writes to officials of the Roman Empire, he does so with no suggestion of superiority. He addresses those officials in the manner of a representative of one order showing due respect and deference to a representative of the other.[26] A material consideration here is that Augustine has no interest in engaging in a trial of strength with the political authorities. On the contrary, he wishes to secure their support – especially against the Donatists – and retain their favour. On the other hand, it is plain that his dualism contains one of the seeds that, in later circumstances of confrontation, were to grow into the hierocratic papal ideology of the 'high' Middle Ages. We need to be clear as to the nature of this seed.

When we view Augustine's remarks about Church and State in their wider theological and metaphysical context, the kind of controversy that they foreshadow is obvious. For all his courtesy – for all his wish, as one might say, to avoid awkwardness – Augustine is aware that the dualism that he postulates is not, and cannot be, a relation of true equality. It is what we may call an asymmetrical dualism. When Christian belief meets Platonist metaphysics, as it so characteristically does in Augustine's mind, the result is an account of the material or temporal order as being in its very nature placed under the spiritual. Augustine says at *De Trinitate* 3:4 that 'certain more gross and inferior bodies are ruled in a certain order through the more subtle and the more potent; but all bodies through spirit, and the whole of creation by its Creator.' This is another dictum of Augustine that later ecclesiastical authors were to find congenial.[27] The 'other' world of the Christian Platonist, the transcendent spiritual world, is clearly superior to the material world. It is the repository of values that can be represented in the world of sight only imperfectly. For the righteous, the world of sight is only a place of pilgrimage; for the unrighteous, it is a theatre of pain and struggle. As we have emphasized, it is Augustine's view, expressed repeatedly, that political arrangements are no more than a regrettable ne-

cessity, inseparable from the depraved condition of mankind. The means of man's redemption, and therefore the only truly important aspect of human experience, is the transformation of human life by the grace of God; and it is through the Church and her sacraments that such grace is transmitted to us. By contrast, the State, ignoble in so many of its aims and harsh in its means, has no direct reference to our true welfare. Even the best State is an external, negative, coercive order, 'ordained of God' not to achieve any positive good, but to suppress, control and discipline us. Thus, although Augustine insists that we have an ordinary duty to obey even unbelieving and tyrannical rulers, the moral superiority of spiritual power and the triumph of Christianity over the things of this world are invariable features of his thought. We have seen already that temporal rulers are to be disobeyed, even though not actively resisted, if they command us to do what God does not permit.

Augustine thus accords great respect to temporal rulers; he recognizes that they are Divinely sanctioned in purpose if not in origin: but he insists that spiritual – and, by implication, ecclesiastical – considerations have ultimately a more authoritative claim on our allegiance. Within the terms of this logic, and of the Platonist metaphysic that informs it, it seems inescapable that spiritual power is not just distinct from secular or temporal power: it is a higher *type* of power. We notice that, in the passage from his commentary on Romans quoted earlier, Augustine says that it is a mistake not to render due honour to secular government in secular matters, but a *greater* mistake to defer to such government in matters of faith.

We must, however, at this point register an important qualification. Augustine himself nowhere takes the view later to be extrapolated from him: that the Church, as representing the *civitas Dei* on earth, is the appointed custodian of justice and that princes can become just rulers only by acknowledging that their authority comes from the Church and is held at her pleasure. That he does not and cannot hold any such view is clear from our earlier discussion of his analysis of justice (see pp. 61–69). He thinks on the one hand that

earthly justice consists in the maintenance of external peace and order. But earthly justice does not depend on the blessing of the Church: even well ordered or well constituted pagan States can exhibit it. On the other, he insists that *vera iustitia*, true justice, cannot exist even in Christian States. It cannot exist at all in a world in which the fallen so greatly outnumber the Elect and some are subject to the coercive dominion of others. True justice cannot be expressed in any earthly State; nor can it be expressed in the earthly Church, in which, as in the State, there are so many who belong to the *civitas terrena*. We stress again that the clear and final differentiation of the City of God from the Earthly City, and hence the realization of true justice, will occur only at the end of history.

Augustine certainly does believe that a State governed by a Christian ruler can achieve a more satisfactory version of justice than any pagan State could. But this is not because of any quality belonging to the Christian State *as* a State, nor is it because the Christian State is institutionally subordinate to the Church. In this connection, we must mention two passages in particular that were later subjected to what one might call creative misinterpretation. The first is the paragraph at *De civitate Dei* 5:24 in which Augustine sets forth the duties of the Christian emperor.

> We do not say that certain Christian emperors [*Christianos quosdam imperatores*][28] were happy because they ruled for a long time, or, dying a peaceful death, left their sons to succeed them in the empire, or subdued the enemies of the commonwealth, or were able both to guard against and suppress the attempts of hostile citizens to rise against them. These and other gifts or comforts of this sorrowful life even certain worshippers of demons have merited to receive, who do not belong to the kingdom of God to which these belong; and this is to be attributed to the mercy of God, Who does not wish those who believe in Him to desire such things as the highest good. But we say that they are happy if they rule righteously; if they are not lifted up amid the praises of those who pay them sublime honours, and the obsequiousness of those who salute them with an excessive humility, but remember that they are but men; if they make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it for the greatest possible ex-

> tension of His worship; if they fear, love and worship God; if more than their own they love that kingdom in which they are not afraid to have partners; if they are slow to punish and ready to pardon; if they apply that punishment as being necessary to the government and defence of the commonwealth, and not in order to gratify their own enmity; if they grant pardon not that iniquity may go unpunished, but with the hope that the transgressor may mend his ways; if they compensate with the lenity of mercy and the liberality of benevolence for whatever severity they may be compelled to decree; if their luxury is as much restrained as it might have been unrestrained; if they prefer to govern wicked desires rather than any nation whatsoever; and if they do all these things not through the ardent desire of empty glory, but through love of eternal felicity, not neglecting to offer to the true God, Who is their God, for their sins, the sacrifices of humility, contrition and prayer. Such Christian emperors are, we say, happy in the present time by hope, and are destined to be so in the enjoyment of the reality itself, when that for which we wait shall have arrived.[29]

This passage has been described as the earliest of all Christian *specula regum.*[30] As such, it was to be quoted and paraphrased many times. Medieval papalists were especially pleased to find in it a plain affirmation that Christian emperors are to 'make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it for the greatest possible extension of His worship.' Does not this mean that emperors and kings are obliged to respond to the Church's command: that secular government is, in effect, the Church's executive arm? Does it not imply that recalcitrant princes are subject to ecclesiastical correction and chastisement? Possibly, in strict logic, it does. In relation to this aphorism, however, we must be clear both about what Augustine himself says and what he does not. In *De civitate Dei* 5:24, and in his many letters to public officials, the most that he says or implies is that Christian rulers are as much subject to the moral requirements of the faith as any other Christian is. This, of itself, is hardly a controversial statement. Emperors are 'happy' now, he tells us, and will be so in the future, if their rule exemplifies the Christian virtues and if they provide a model of righteousness, mercy and humility to those for whom they are responsible. Like all Christians, emperors

are obliged to serve the Church in a manner consistent with their station in life, and to offer up 'the sacrifices of humility, contrition and prayer.' Like all Christians, they must set a good example to others. Like all Christians, they should be dutiful and obedient disciples of Christ in their public and private capacities. The emperor's station in life is, of course, one that furnishes him with unrivalled opportunities for service. But what Augustine certainly does *not* say or suggest is that rulers as such are jurisdictionally subject to the Church's command in temporal affairs. The admirable qualities found in the Christian State, including the readiness of emperors to 'make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it for the greatest possible extension of His worship,' are not attributed to the fact that emperors are mere officials of the Church. They arise because the good Christian emperor will, as an individual, take seriously the duties that belong as much to him as they do to any other Christian.

Second, we mention the passage at *De civitate Dei* 5:26 in which Augustine refers with approval to an incident that had caused a stir shortly before his ordination to the priesthood: the confrontation, in 390, between St Ambrose of Milan and the emperor Theodosius I.[31] Theodosius 'rejoiced more in being a member of the Church than in being the ruler of the world'; but, having impulsively put to death a mob of rioting Christians in Thessalonica, he was shamed by St Ambrose into the performance of public penance when the latter refused to celebrate the Eucharist in his presence.

> [W]hat could be more admirable than the religious humility shown [by Theodosius] when ... being laid hold of by the discipline of the Church, he did penance with such humility that the people, as they prayed for him, were more ready to weep when they saw the imperial majesty thus brought low than they were to fear it when it was angered by their sin?

Subsequent ecclesiastical writers who found this episode in Augustine lost no opportunity to appeal to it in corroboration of the principle that the Church may punish and depose princes. Once

more, however, it is necessary to attend to Augustine's actual words. They occur as part of a celebration of the favour that God shows to righteous rulers. They do not at all support the claim that rulers owe their position to the Church's appointment or consent or can be deprived of it at her behest. Augustine refers to the emperor's capitulation to St Ambrose because he wishes to commend a notable example of 'religious humility' in the face of spiritual rebuke. By his dutiful submission to the discipline of the Church, Theodosius restored himself to the state of grace in which all Christians should wish to be. Augustine certainly does not suggest that the emperor was required to do penance in order to retrieve his status as emperor. He does not, in other words, think that the emperor's *political* status was in any way subject to St Ambrose's authority or could in any way be 'brought low' by him.[32]

Perhaps we are right to think that Augustine did not follow his theological and metaphysical principles through to their most obvious conclusions. If he did not, this is no doubt because his dealings with Roman governmental officials were of such a kind that he had no need or incentive to do so. As to the sense in which his dualism contains the seed of later papalist claims, we must be clear that, on the one hand, Augustine himself makes no attempt to extract from it a definite ideology of ecclesiastical supremacy. On the other hand, it is understandable that later churchmen who found themselves in a less cordial relation with secular princes should have discovered in Augustine's dualism implications favourable to their cause.

These implications are, indeed, already beginning to clarify in the statements of Gelasius I, made no more than seventy years after Augustine's death. Augustine had politely counselled the proconsul Apringius to remember the Divine judgement seat at which he would have to render an account of his judgements. In his letter to Anastasius II, Gelasius paraphrases Augustine unmistakably, but with a shift in meaning. It is, Gelasius says, the *priests* who will have to answer at that judgment seat for the behaviour of kings, and the burden borne by the priests is therefore the greater. He continues:

> Know, O most clement Son, that although you take precedence over the human race in dignity, nonetheless you bend your neck in devout submission to those who preside over things Divine, and look to them for the means of your salvation. In partaking of the heavenly sacraments ... you acknowledge that you ought to be subject to the order of religion rather than ruling it [*subti te debere cognoscis religionis ordine potius quam praeesse*]... For if the ministers of religion, acknowledging that your rule, insofar as it pertains to the keeping of public discipline, has been given to you by Divine disposition, obey your laws lest they seem to obstruct the proper course of worldly affairs, with what good will, I pray, ought you to obey those who have been charged with the dispensation of the holy mysteries?

In his Fourth Tractate, produced some two years later, Gelasius writes as follows:

> They [the civil authorities] fear [*formidant*] to intervene [in religious matters], knowing that these matters do not belong to the measure of their power, which has been permitted to them [*permissum est*] to judge human things and not to rule things Divine. How, then, can they presume [*praesumunt*] to judge those by whom Divine things are administered? Before the coming of Christ ... certain persons existed who were simultaneously priests and kings, as the Sacred History shows in the case of Melchizedek;[33] and the devil imitated this among his own peoples ... so that the pagan emperors were also called *pontifex maximus*. But after the coming of [Christ], Who was Himself both true King and true Pontiff, no subsequent emperor has taken the title of pontiff,[34] and no pontiff has laid claim to royal dignity ... For Christ, mindful of human frailty, has ... separated both offices according to the different functions and dignity proper to each, wishing that His people should be preserved by a healthy humility, and not again ensnared by human pride; so that Christian emperors should now have need of the pontiffs for their eternal life, and the pontiffs should make use of [*uterentur*] the resources of the imperial government for the direction of temporal things: to the end that spiritual activity might be removed from carnal distractions [*quatenus spiritualis actio a carnalibus distaret incursibus*], and that the soldier of the Lord might not be at all entangled in secular business;[35] and that one who is entangled in secular business might not be seen to preside over things Divine. In this way He took care that each order should be humble ... and that the profession of each might be suited to the special aptitudes of those who practise it.[36]

Dualism still, then: hence the phrase 'the Augustinian/Gelasian principle.' But in the definitions of Pope Gelasius, Augustine's unexceptionable precept – that Christian rulers must serve the Church as dutiful sons and set an example of righteousness to their subjects – has begun a process of hardening into something different and more contentious. It has started to crystallise into the doctrine that rulers as such are juridically subordinate to the Church. The words and phrases that we have emphasized in quoting Gelasius deserve analysis. 'In partaking of the heavenly sacraments … you acknowledge that you ought to be subject to the order of religion rather than ruling it': *subti te debere cognoscis religionis ordine potius quam praeesse.* This is a pregnant sentence, and *subtus* – 'below,' 'beneath,' 'underneath' – is a remarkable word to address to an emperor. Reception of the sacraments, Gelasius is suggesting, is an acknowledgement of subjection; but subjection of what kind? It is difficult not to see an intentional disjunction in the phrase *potius quam praeesse.* The emperor ought to be subject to the order of religion '*rather than* ruling it.' The implication is that it is not possible for emperors to do what Constantine and his successors had purported to do: to declare themselves subject to the Church spiritually, yet sovereign over her temporally. It is instructive to observe more generally the kind of vocabulary that a pope of the late fifth century, evidently conscious of Augustine, now thinks it appropriate to use in reference to civil authority: *formidant*; *permissum est*; *praesumunt*; *uterentur*. The civil authorities 'fear,' or ought to fear, to intervene in matters of religion; they are 'permitted' to have power; they cannot 'presume' to judge things Divine. It is the pontiffs who have final responsibility for directing temporal things, and in doing so they should 'make use of the resources of the imperial government' *quatenus spiritualis actio a carnalibus distaret incursibus.* There is still plenty of ambiguity and tactful imprecision in the words of Gelasius, but their tendency is unmistakable. Emperors and kings exist to protect the Church from 'carnal distractions.' The task of secular government is to do those things that are beneath the Church's dignity.[37]

What, in view of all this, are we to make of the connection between Augustine's own remarks and the ambitious claims of medieval 'political Augustinianism'? In asserting the separateness of temporal from spiritual power while insisting also that spiritual considerations outrank material ones, it seems clear that Augustine gave ammunition to the controversialists of the future, albeit, perhaps, unwittingly. Within a century of his death, a definite ecclesiological slant was being imparted to the principle of dualism. Also, Augustine's tendency to stress the ignoble origin and inferior nature of politics was readily picked up, and sometimes exaggerated, by medieval ecclesiastics wishing to emphasize the purity, and hence the authority, of the Church in comparison with royal or imperial power. At the beginning of this chapter we mentioned Gregory VII's letter to Hermann of Metz. We mention also the treatise called *Ad Gebehardum* written in about 1085 by Manegold of Lautenbach, a partisan of Gregory VII. In it, Manegold comes near to comparing the activity of a king in ruling to that of a swineherd in tending pigs. He is answering the assertion of the imperialist author Wenrich of Trier that a subject's oath of fealty may not in any circumstances be broken. Why, Manegold asks, should the king who breaks faith with his subjects be less liable to removal than the swineherd who fails to take proper care of his master's pigs?[38] We may take it that the belittling implications of the analogy are not unintended.[39] Throughout the Middle Ages, the incontrovertible superiority of spiritual to temporal affairs, and hence of spiritual to secular authority, was the reef upon which attempts by royalist and imperialist authors to assert the genuine separateness of the two powers invariably foundered.[40] Ultimately, it was an Augustinian reef.

(c) The Donatist Controversy and Religious Persecution

Much, though by no means all, of Augustine's thinking on the subject of Church and State was stimulated by his involvement, between 391 and 417, in the prolonged and bitter controversy between

the Catholic Church in Africa and the schismatic Christian sect known as Donatism. Because the Donatist controversy is of such importance to an understanding of so many of Augustine's directly 'political' letters and treatises, it will be as well to give a short description of it.[41]

The Donatist church had been a source of constant and often violent dispute in African Christianity for some forty years before Augustine's birth. The origins of Donatism lay in the grim days of 303–305, when the Church had suffered the 'great persecution' under Diocletian. In discussing Augustine's theory of obligation, we mentioned the practice of the authorities during the era of the persecutions of forcing Christians into some act amounting to a repudiation of their faith (see pp. 76–77). We should perhaps add that the motive behind this coercion was not necessarily or primarily religious. The question of exactly why the Christians were persecuted at any particular time is a complex one; but we can say that, to a significant extent, they were persecuted not as heterodox, but as socially and politically suspect. Their beliefs were understood, or misunderstood, as entailing disloyalty to the State: an imputation that, as we saw in Chapter 2, Augustine is still anxious to rebut.[42] They were notoriously private and secretive. They declared themselves to be the subjects of an absent King: a King Who would return and sweep away the existing order. They declined military service. They abstained from the oaths and ceremonials thought essential to patriotic duty. The gestures that they were required to make on pain of martyrdom were, at least in some degree, gestures of political allegiance. But the pagan cult of the Romans was the established religion of the State. It was inextricably bound up with Rome's political culture and presided over by an emperor whose person was officially divine. For this reason, it was thought appropriate that demonstrations of political loyalty should take the form of religious submission. Christians might be invited to avoid death by offering incense to Jupiter, publicly renouncing their faith, or handing over their copies of the Sacred Scriptures for destruction.

During and after the Diocletianic persecution, Christians fortunate enough not to have been confronted with such a choice regarded with pious horror, and sometimes with hatred, those who had saved their skins by capitulation. In the greatest odium of all were held those who had yielded up the Word of God into the hands of unbelievers. Such persons were called *traditores*, a word that has the dual meaning of 'handers over' and 'traitors'; though by Augustine's day *traditor* seems to have become an all-purpose term of abuse.[43] Some semi-waverers had resorted to trickery, apparently with the approval of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage. They had handed over altered versions of the Scriptures or the writings of heretics or treatises on secular subjects, knowing that the officials would probably not know the difference or bother to read them. But the puritanical thought this expedient just as bad as handing over the real thing. These rigorists soon found an effective spokesman in Donatus, bishop of Casae Nigrae.[44]

Donatism appears to have been a social and an economic phenomenon as well as – perhaps as much as – a religious one.[45] Its special appeal was to the poor, ignorant and isolated. It may well have reflected social resentments within the African Church as between the rural Numidian peasantry and the urban Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy. Casae Nigrae was a remote community on the edge of the Sahara, and Donatus is represented, though by hostile sources, as having been an illiterate fanatic. He and those who followed him held views of the most stringent kind about who is and who is not entitled to be a member of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ. As such, it must be the Church of the pure. Those who by their actions show themselves impure are unworthy to be recognized as members of Christ's body. The Donatists shared a cast of mind long present in African Christianity, though now officially discouraged: a cast of mind eloquently represented by Tertullian, who had taught in the most emphatic terms that flight from persecution is not permissible.[46] Martyrdom is the goal of all true believers: 'may you gain your crown' was the Donatists' greeting to

one another. Those who have avoided martyrdom by betrayal or ruse are the *lapsi*: the lapsed, the downfallen. According to the Donatists, the lapsed cannot be accepted back into the Church. Priests who are *traditores* cannot administer valid sacraments; bishops who are *traditores* cannot confer valid ordination or consecration. The people of God should now rise up and lay hold of the wealth of the rich in preparation for the coming of Jesus. From about 317 onwards these opinions were enforced by bands of religious terrorists called *circumcelliones* or *agonistici*, who attacked the persons and property of Catholics, often with terrible ferocity.[47] Sometimes gangs of *circumcelliones* were led by senior members of the Donatist clergy; Optatus, bishop of Thamugadi, was a notorious example.[48]

The Donatist schism began in earnest in 312, the year of Constantine's conversion: an event to which the Donatists reacted by refusing to believe that the emperor and his henchmen could be true believers. In 312, a cleric named Caecilianus was elected by the presbyters of the diocese to the vacant see of Carthage. He was consecrated by Bishop Felix of Apthungi and two other bishops. On the face of it, this was a normal piece of ecclesiastical administration. But Caecilianus and Felix were, or were alleged to be, *traditores*.[49] Acrimonious disputes ensued, and the opinion emerged that Caecilianus was neither worthy of the episcopate nor validly consecrated. An armed band of Donatists appeared before the residence of the Bishop of Numidia, the senior African bishop, and by intimidation extracted from him a document declaring Caecilianus deposed and replaced by a protégé of Donatus called Majorinus. Majorinus was the chaplain – gossip said he was more than that – of a wealthy patroness called Lucilla, who had fallen out with Caecilianus. The Donatists foisted this arrangement on the local clergy by force and threats. In 312 they managed to get it confirmed by a synod of seventy bishops in Carthage. A bishop who objected to Majorinus was slaughtered on the spot.

Thus began the Donatist church, which, notwithstanding condemnation by the pope, the emperor and two synods of bishops,

was to survive into the seventh century, when both Catholicism and Donatism in Africa were overcome by Islam. Donatism began as a schism rather than a heresy: as a dispute over ecclesiastical organization rather than doctrine. But the implications of their position soon led its exponents into heresy. When they declared that the emperor and his cronies cannot be saved, they asserted, in effect, that there are members of the human race whom Christ cannot redeem. When they insisted on the rebaptism of Catholics migrating into the Donatist fold, they succumbed to the erroneous view that the sacrament of baptism can be administered more than once.[50] Erroneous too was their insistence that the sacraments can be validly celebrated only by worthy ministers. In addition to numerous letters and sermons, Augustine wrote several lengthy treatises against the Donatists: *Contra partem Donati* (397);[51] *Contra epistulam Parmeniani* (398); *De baptismo contra Donatistas* and *Contra litteras Petiliani* (400); *Contra Cresconium* (405); *De correctione Donatistarum* and *Contra Gaudentium* (417).

The Donatist controversy was the earliest instance of the secular powers becoming engaged in religious and quasi-religious disputes between Christians. The Roman authorities were involved almost from the beginning: not least because, in 313, despite their reluctance to believe in the reality of his conversion, the Donatists themselves appealed for adjudication to the newly-converted emperor Constantine. The fact that the Donatists had no qualms about seeking imperial support for themselves is one that Augustine does not omit to point out when they scold the Catholic Church for doing the same thing.[52] In 347 and 348 the emperor Constans instituted severe measures against them: not so much on religious grounds as in reaction to the criminality and violence of the *circumcelliones*. In response to Catholic appeals for official support, numerous edicts against the Donatists appeared during the years from 392 to 399. From 399 onwards they were punished increasingly as heretics and schismatics rather than as disrupters of the peace. In 404 the Catholic bishops of Africa, assembled at the ninth Council of Carthage,

asked the emperor Honorius for further State action. Honorius's first Edict of Unity (12 February, 405) imposed heavy penalties on the Donatists. On 30 January, 412 a further Edict of Unity confirmed all previously existing anti-Donatist legislation.

The Donatist controversy had a greater effect on the formation of Augustine's practical political ideas than any other factor in his life. In particular, he has incurred much reproach for his advocacy in connection with it of religious persecution: of the principle that the Church may enlist the aid of the State in coercing those who threaten her doctrinal or organizational integrity. A notable feature of Augustine's intellectual biography is the change that his opinions on this subject underwent between 392 and 417. The course of this change is clearly traceable in his letters written during this period.[53]

Originally, his view had been the one that common sense seems most readily to suggest: that differences of belief must be resolved by reason and argument alone, since the mere appearance of conformity secured by force or fear has no value. 'My opinion at first was that no one should be forced into the unity of Christ: that we must act only by words, fight only by arguments, and overcome by reason alone, lest we should have those whom we knew to be true heretics becoming false Catholics.'[54] Writing in 392 to Maximinus, a Donatist bishop who later returned to the Church and became the Catholic bishop of Sinita,[55] he says:

> I do not propose that men should be compelled to embrace any communion whatsoever, but that the truth should be made known to men who are able to seek it without apprehension. For our part, there will be no appeal to men's fear of the temporal powers. For yours, let there be no terror produced by gangs of *circumcelliones*.[56]

After about 400, however, Augustine came increasingly to hold that the Church may rightly call upon the secular authorities to bring the force of law to bear against heretics and schismatics: partly, indeed, to protect Catholics against the violence of the *circumcelliones*, but

also, and much more significantly, to repair and maintain the Church's doctrinal unity. His emphasis on this latter aspect becomes especially prominent after 406. In a letter written in that year to a magistrate called Festus, he says for the first time that he would support a policy of coercion 'even if I were opposing men who were only involved in the darkness of error and who had not dared to assault anyone with insane violence.'[57] From 406 onwards, Augustine believed that even those outsiders innocent of material harm should be coerced. They should be coerced for no other reason than to secure their return to the Catholic Church. His fullest justifications of this position are developed in long letters written in 408, to Vincentius, Rogatist[58] bishop of Cartenna,[59] and in 417 to Boniface, tribune, later count, of Africa.[60]

It is important to understand that Augustine never suggests that mere compulsion can bring about a genuine change of heart. Of itself, we remember, the action of the law can only be exterior. Persecution as such, as affecting the body, cannot make people think or believe one thing rather than another. It can, however, have an indirect bearing on their inner lives. Its external effects can stimulate individuals to find their own way to the truth. Severe measures and the fear of them can create the conditions in which those who hold erroneous beliefs are motivated to consider the true nature of their beliefs, acknowledge that they are erroneous, and willingly exchange them for correct ones.

> It is not that anyone can be made good against his will, but that, through fear of suffering what he does not wish to suffer, he either renounces his hostile prejudices, or is compelled to examine a truth of which he had been ignorant; and under the influence of this fear repudiates the falsehood for which he once contended ... and now willingly holds what he previously rejected. No doubt it would be useless to assert this in any words whatsoever, if it were not shown to be true by so many examples ... For, as we know with certainly, how many were already willing to become Catholics because moved by the most manifest plainness of the truth, who nonetheless put off doing so day after day because they were afraid of of-

> fending their own people! How many were bound not by the truth ... but by the heavy chains of obdurate custom ... How many believed the party of Donatus to be the true Church merely because ease had made them too torpid or conceited or idle to examine Catholic truth! How many would have entered earlier had not the rumours put about by slanderers ... shut them out! How many ... remained in the party of Donatus only because they had been born into it and no one was compelling them to leave it and pass over into the Catholic Church![61]

Augustine seems to think that religious belief – or at least unsound religious belief – is in some sense socially constructed, and that persecution can contribute to authentic conversions by modifying the social circumstances of those whose beliefs it is desired to change.[62] If it was wrong for unbelieving emperors to persecute Christians, why, the Donatists demanded to know, is it not wrong for Catholics to do so? Persecution, Augustine replies, is not an evil in itself, nor are all those who suffer it martyrs: 'What deserves to be considered ... is not the mere fact that someone is coerced, but the nature of that for the sake of which he is coerced, whether it be good or bad.'[63] The truth is immutable, but outward conditions are not: people can be re-orientated in relation to the truth. It is possible to shock people out of complacency, or out of the habit of following the crowd, by bringing them forcibly into contact with those who teach correct doctrines. So stimulated, they may come to recognize the truth for themselves and distinguish it from falsehood and rumour. Coercion at the behest of the Catholic Church may counteract the wish not to antagonize one's fellow heretics; coercion can break the bonds of custom, habit and lethargy. That these possibilities are real is, Augustine holds, borne out by his own experience and that of his colleagues:

> To all these people the fear [of the laws enacted against the Donatists] has been so beneficial that some now say ... 'we already knew this to be true, but we were held by the bonds of custom. Thanks be to the Lord, Who has burst these bonds and brought us over into the bond of peace!' Others say, 'we did not know that the truth was here, nor had we the will to learn

> it; but fear made us keen to examine it, when we became afraid that we might suffer the loss of temporal things without any gain in eternal things. Thanks be to the Lord, Who by the goad of fear has jolted us out of our negligence, so that, now, being alarmed, we might seek out those things that, while we were at ease, we had no desire to know.' Others say, 'We were afraid to enter the Church because of false rumours, which we could not know to be false unless we did enter; and we would not enter until we were compelled' ... Others say, 'we believed that it really did not matter where we held the faith of Christ; but thanks be to the Lord, Who has gathered us in from a state of schism and shown us that it is fitting that the one God should be worshipped in unity.[64]

It is a pardonable anachronism to say that Augustine's argument is a utilitarian one. Good effects are secured not by persecution itself, but when the pain of persecution is made to preponderate over whatever pleasure the individual enjoys by remaining comfortable and unreflective. Characteristically, Augustine holds that the coercion of those outside the Church is, when carried out with the correct intentionality, an act of love. In causing the Donatists to be compelled, the Church 'is employing the good of discipline to expel the evil of sin, not with a hatred that seeks to harm, but with a love that seeks to heal.'[65] No love can be greater than Christ's; yet when Christ wished to open the eyes of St Paul, He first smote him to the ground with His power and struck him blind. In Christ's parable of the Great Supper, when the servants are sent out to hunt for guests, their master's instruction to them is revealing: 'Go out into the highways and hedges and *compel them to come in*, that my house may be filled.'[66] In bringing compulsion to bear on unbelievers the Church is only following the example of her Lord.[67]

However much one may deplore Augustine's eventual standpoint or question his reasoning, it should in fairness be noted that the penalties that he has in mind are not of the kind that one might normally associate with religious persecution. He recommends fines and confiscations of property (see pp. 95–98); he explicitly asks that physical penalties should not be too harsh, and especially that they

should not extend to the sentence of death.[68] His position is summed up cogently by Professor Frend: 'Limited by his environment and class, Augustine failed to appreciate the religious ideas and background of his Donatist opponents. He thought he was dealing with mental aberrations hardened into custom, from which people could be jolted by *mild* persecution.'[69]

From our point of view in this chapter, an important aspect of Augustine's 'Donatist' letters from 408 onwards is their insistence that Christian rulers have a duty to protect and promote the Church. Part of what it is to be 'an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil' is to punish those whose beliefs and actions compromise the Church's peace and damage her spiritual unanimity. Exactly what kind of duty is this? When Roman officials took action against them at the Church's request, the Donatists protested that there is in Scripture nothing to indicate that the Apostles ever called upon the authorities for help in enforcing Christian doctrine. Augustine agrees that indeed there is not, 'for what emperor had then believed in Christ and begun to serve Him in the cause of godliness by enacting laws against ungodliness?'[70] But in the era following the Resurrection, he says, the prophecy of the psalm has been fulfilled: 'Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear.'[71] Christian emperors now willingly enact righteous laws, as the Scriptures had foretold they would. The powers that be are ordained of God, and it is obvious that those powers who acknowledge God should do His will. But they do it out of their own spontaneous recognition of what is right, not because they have been instructed to do so by the Church: advised and requested, perhaps, but not commanded. Nor, as we saw earlier (see pp. 74–81), would an emperor who failed to do God's will thereby forfeit his claim to be emperor. The backsliding emperor Julian renounced the faith of Christ. He was 'an unbelieving emperor, a worshipper of idols,' but he was an emperor nonetheless, and the Christian soldiers who obeyed him were right to do so. We must note once more that Augustine never argues or suggests

that the obligation that rulers have to serve the Church attaches to them as rulers *per se*; still less that they can be required to do so on pain of consequences. Rather, to be obliged to serve God is part of what it is to be a Christian, whether one is a ruler or not.

> For a man serves God in one way insofar as he is a man, and in another way insofar as he is also a king. Insofar as he is a man, he serves Him by living faithfully; but insofar as he is also a king, he serves Him by enforcing with suitable rigour laws that command what is righteous and punish the reverse.[72]

The duty of service that temporal rulers have is not an indicator of their juridical subjection to the Church. It is a particular instance of the general principle that all men, no matter who they are, should take whatever opportunities to serve God are provided by the walk of life in which they find themselves.

* * * * *

Reducing the matter to as simple a paraphrase as can be made of something so complex and unformed, we may say that Augustine's thinking on the subject of temporal and spiritual power – 'Church and State' – involves the following tightly interwoven themes.

1. The temporal and spiritual powers are separate spheres of authority, ordained to different purposes and employing different methods. But the duality of the two powers is asymmetrical. It is asymmetrical because
2. spiritual power is intrinsically or metaphysically superior to temporal power, and,
3. unlike spiritual power, political power can achieve only what is negative and external, and is necessary at all only because human beings have become estranged from God. Political power has no positive moral good to contribute to our lives.
4. Ordinarily, inasmuch as the State is a Divinely-ordained instrument of order and discipline, obedience is due as a matter of reli-

gious duty even to wicked rulers; but spiritual matters must in the nature of the case take precedence over temporal ones in the event of conflict.

5. Christian rulers have a duty to rule well, to set a good example to those under them and to make their resources available for the advancement and defence of the Church. Their duties include the enactment and enforcement of laws against heretics and schismatics; but

6. those duties are owed by Christian rulers not because they are subject to the Church's command *qua* rulers, but because, *qua* Christians, they find themselves in a position that affords opportunities for service of a particular kind.

These themes are, we say again, developed in a largely unconnected fashion. To treat them as though they amounted to a 'theory' of Church and State would be to give a false impression. They occur often in sermons and occasional letters in which there is no evident intention to lay down hard and fast rules. We should bear in mind also that, for Augustine, there is no 'problem' of Church and State. His relationship with the Roman government in Africa was not one of conflict or confrontation, and he makes no assertion that is not compatible with an amicable partnership between the Church and the temporal authorities. It is undeniable that his remarks contain some of the germs of the ecclesiastical theories that reached their culmination in the thirteenth century. But there is no reason to suppose that he meant any of his remarks to bear a 'hierocratic' construction or that he himself thought anything of this kind. It is certainly not his view that the institutional Church is the City of God on earth; nor is it is view that the Earthly City is any earthly State, or temporal political arrangements considered in general. He does not think that secular justice depends upon ecclesiastical approval, nor does he anywhere assert or imply that rulers are accountable to the Church with respect to their secular activities, still less punishable or removable by her. It is understandable that

support should have been found in Augustine's writings for the claims of medieval papalism; but it is true also that those who found them did so by a combination of exegetical ingenuity and wishful thinking.

NOTES

1. On this subject see R.W. Dyson, *Normative Theories of Society and Government in Five Medieval Thinkers* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Mellen, 2003); K. Pennington, *Popes and Bishops: A Study of the Papal Monarchy in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984); B. Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050–1300* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980); W. Ullmann, *The Political Theory of the Medieval Canonists* (London: Methuen, 1949); *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*; J.A. Watt, *The Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Thirteenth Century* (London: Burns & Oates, 1965); M.J. Wilks, *The Problem of Sovereignty in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1963); C.T. Wood, *Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII* (New York: Krieger, 1967).
2. Note the comment of J.N. Figgis (*The Political Aspects of Saint Augustine's 'City of God,'* p. 82) that, in dealing with 'Augustine's political or semi-political influence' it is perhaps 'safer to say that we are examining the prevalence of certain ideals, of which St Augustine was, or was believed to be, the exponent; and that [his authority] therefore presumably had to do with their prevalence.'
3. For a translation of this letter see Dyson, *Normative Theories*, Appendix II(a); see also A.J.M. MacDonald, *Hildebrand: a Life of Gregory VII* (London: Methuen, 1932); G. Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970).
4. This kind of argument is summarized in a general way in the short treatise called *Quaestio de potestate papae* or (from its *incipit*) *Rex pacificus*, written, probably in France, and possibly by the royalist author John of Paris, at the beginning of the fourteenth century:

   > Augustine, at *De civitate Dei* 2:21, says this: 'A commonwealth cannot be governed without justice.' Now there is no true justice in that commonwealth of which Christ is not the ruler. But the commonwealth of the Christian people must be righteous and true. Therefore Christ must be the ruler in it. But the pope is the vicar of Christ ...

> The pope is therefore the ruler of the commonwealth even in temporals.

(*Quaestio de potestate papae* (*Rex pacificus*), ed. and trans. R.W. Dyson (Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: Mellen, 1999), p. 64). But the argument is a versatile one; an imperialist version of it is offered by Engelbert of Admont, writing in about 1307:

> Augustine … concludes in book nineteen of *The City of God* that outside the Church there never was nor can be a true empire, although there were emperors of a sort, or as such, but not absolutely [*qualitercumque et secundum quid, non simpliciter*], who were outside the Christian faith and Church.

(*De ortu et fine Romani imperii*, ed. and trans. T.M. Izbicki and C.J. Nederman, in *Three Tracts on Empire* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2000), p. 66).

5. From the eighth century, the Western Church exploited to the full the dramatic possibilities of coronation and anointing as ways of emphasizing that the king's authority descends upon him from God through the agency of the Church. Coronation ceremonies were intentional imitations of Biblical models. Just as Saul was anointed king over Israel by the prophet Samuel – and eventually deposed by him (see I Samuel 10, 15 and 16; I Kings 1) – so are the emperors and kings of the present day anointed by bishops, archbishops and popes. The instance most often mentioned is the coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III on Christmas day 800: the event which, as popes and their publicists insisted, had brought about the *translatio imperii*, the 'translation' of imperial authority from Byzantium to the West. On this subject see C.A. Bouman, *Sacring and Crowning: The Development of the Latin Ritual for the Anointing of Kings and the Coronation of an Emperor before the Eleventh Century* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1957). See also W. Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, chs. 3, 5, 8.
6. For the text of Giles's treatise called *De ecclesiastica potestate* see R.W. Dyson (ed.), *Giles of Rome's 'On Ecclesiastical Power': A Medieval Theory of World Government* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
7. I Corinthians 2:15. For the use to which this text was put see, e.g., Giles of Rome, *De ecclesiastica potestate* 1:2.
8. For a broad treatment of these controversies see especially Dyson, *Normative Theories*, passim. See also *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 6; Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State*; Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*.

9. *Les registres de Boniface VIII*, eds G.A.L. Digard, M. Faucon and A. Thomas (Paris: Bibliothèque des Ecoles Françaises, 1884–1939), 5382. For a translation see Dyson, *Normative Theories*, Appendix III. See also D.E. Luscombe, 'The *Lex divinitatis* in the Bull *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII,' in C.N.L. Brooke, D.E. Luscombe, G.H. Martin and D. Owen (eds), *Church and State in the Midde Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); W. Ullmann, 'Die Bulle *Unam Sanctam*: Rückblick und Ausblick,' *Römische Historische Mittelungen* 16 (1974).
10. This term, originally used more narrowly than we are using it, was coined by F.-X. Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique* (Paris: Vrin, 1939). See Dyson, *Normative Theories*, passim; *Natural Law and Political Realism*, vol. 1, ch. 6.
11. 'Church and State' is an acceptable way of avoiding cumbersome phrases; but we make again the point that 'State' is not really a suitable word to use in this context. It is more appropriate to understand medieval controversies about 'Church and State' as disputes about how two types of power or authority should function within a *single* community: the *res publica Christiana*, the united commonwealth of Christendom.
12. The doctrine was brought to the farthest point of its development by the emperor Justinian I (527–565). The first title of Justinian's *Codex* of 534 is *De Summa Trinitate et de fide Catholica, et ut nemo de ea publice contendere audeat*: 'On the Holy Trinity and the Catholic faith; and that no one may contend in public about these things.' Public contention about the articles of faith is now no more permissible than public contention about the provisions of the law. The articles of faith have, indeed, *become* provisions of the law.
13. The term is now associated especially with Professor Ullmann; though, according to *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, it first appears on p. 349 of *The Edinburgh Review* of April, 1890.
14. This is what most people take the words ἐπισκοπος τῶν ἐκτός to mean. See Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4:24.
15. See Rufinus of Aquileia, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1:2; see also Hosius of Cordova, as quoted by St Athanasius at *Historia Arianorum* 44.
16. See R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988).
17. Constantine's participation in the Council of Nicaea is described in detail in Eusebius's *Vita Constantini.*
18. For Augustine's indebtedness to the ideas on the same subject of St Ambrose, see R.W. and A.J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, vol. 1, pp. 180–184.

19. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine*, p. 172.
20. See Dyson, *Normative Theories*, passim.
21. Augustine recognizes, however, that the Church's involvement in practical affairs, however distracting and regrettable, is to some extent unavoidable in practice. See *De opere monachorum* 29:37; *Enarrationes in psalmos* 118:24:3.
22. *Expositio quarumdam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos* 72; cf. *Epistulae* 134:1–3.
23. Romans 13:4
24. *Epistulae* 134:1–3.
25. *Epistulae* 12:2.
26. For examples see E.M. Atkins and R.J. Dodaro, *Augustine: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), passim.
27. See, e.g. Giles of Rome, *De ecclesiastica potestate* 1:5. Having quoted the passage from *De Trinitate*, Giles goes on:

    > And so if the whole universe ... is so well ordered that inferior bodies are under superior and all bodies are under the spiritual and spiritual substance itself is under the Supreme Spirit, that is, under God ... so, among the faithful themselves, all temporal lords and every earthly power must be ruled and governed through the spiritual and ecclesiastical power, and especially through the Supreme Pontiff, who holds the supreme and highest rank in the Church and in spiritual power. But the Supreme Pontiff himself must be judged only by God. For ... it is he who judges all things and is judged by no one: that is, by no mere man, but by God alone.

28. *Quosdam* here may seem to imply that some Christian emperors have been less happy and successful than others. What Augustine probably means is: 'We do not say that certain emperors who, because they were Christians, were happier than others, were happy because ...'
29. *De civitate Dei* 5:24; and cf. *Epistulae* 155:3:10–13.
30. See Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine*, p. 131; Figgis, *The Political Aspects of Saint Augustine's 'City of God,'* p. 83.
31. See Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5:17; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7:25:316; Paulinus, *Vita sancti Ambrosii* 24; Ambrose, *Epistulae* 51. A similar incident had occurred in 388, when Theodosius accepted public humiliation at the hands of Ambrose and revoked an order requiring the Christians of Callinicum to compensate the local Jewish community for property they had destroyed (see Ambrose, *Epistulae* 41:27). Those who refer to relations between St Ambrose and Theodosius I have a tendency

to conflate these two events. For their context and significance see F. Homes Dudden, *The Life and Times of St Ambrose*, p. 381; cf. C.N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, ch. 9. See also S.L. Greenslade, *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius* (London: SCM Press, 1954); N.Q. King, *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1961); A. Lippold, *Theodosius der Grosse und Seine Zeit* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1968).

32. The incident is cited, for example, in the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury (ed. C.J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)), who says (4:3) that Theodosius

> was suspended by the priest of Milan from the use of the regalia and imperial insignia [*a sacerdote Mediolanensi a regalium usu et insignibus imperii suspensus est*] because he deserved punishment ... and the emperor patiently and solemnly performed the penance imposed upon him for homicide.

Clearly, the story has grown in the telling. In the version of it that Augustine knows, St Ambrose had by moral suasion required the emperor to do penance as a condition of readmission to the Eucharist, and the emperor had shown laudable humility in complying. Now, a significant elaboration has appeared. Ambrose is said to have imposed upon the emperor a sentence amounting to temporary deposition: to have 'suspended' him 'from the use of the regalia and imperial insignia.' That St Ambrose certainly never dreamt of doing or attempting anything of the kind has ceased to matter in the world of ecclesiastical rhetoric.

33. Genesis 14:18.
34. This is not quite true; but in about 360, in an act of great symbolic significance, the title *pontifex maximus* was formally relinquished by the emperor Gratian and conferred upon Pope Damasus I.
35. Cf. II Timothy 2:4.
36. *Tractatus* 4:11.
37. It is perhaps significant above all that, in his twelfth letter, Gelasius should have invoked the classical Roman distinction between *potestas* and *auctoritas*, 'power' and 'authority': *auctoritas sacrata pontificum, et regalis potestas*, 'the consecrated authority of the pontiffs, and royal power'. On this subject see Dyson, *Normative Theories*, pp. 88–90. See also Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, pp. 14–26. For different views see E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums* II (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1933), pp, 65, 753; A.K.

Zeigler, 'Pope Gelasius and his Teaching on the Relation of Church and State', *Catholic Historical Review* 27 (1942).

38. *Ad Gebehardum liber*, ed. K. Franke, in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, *Libelli de Lite* vol. 1, p. 365. The Gebhard to whom the pamphlet is addressed is Archbishop Gebhard of Salzburg.

39. Cf. Boniface VIII's reply to the emissaries of Philip the Fair at the consistory held in the summer of 1302 (italics mine):

> We have been learned in the law for forty years, and we know very well that the powers established by God are two. How should or can anyone suppose that anything so foolish or stupid [as the contrary] is in our head, or has been? We declare that we do not wish to usurp the jurisdiction of the king in any way ... but the king cannot deny that he is subject to us by reason of sin ... Our predecessors deposed three kings of France. They can read it in their chronicles and we in ours, and one case is to be found also in the *Decretum* [at C.15:6:3, *Alius item*]. And although we are not worthy to walk in the footsteps of our predecessors, if the king committed the same crimes as those kings committed, or greater ones, *we should with great grief and sadness dismiss him like a servant.*

P. Dupuy, *Histoire du différend d'entre le Pape Boniface VIII* —

40. For examples of royalist and imperialist argument see Dyson, *Three Royalist Tracts*; Izbicki and Nederman, *Three Tracts on Empire*; Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State*; John of Paris, *Tractatus de potestate regia et papali*, ed. J. Leclercq, *Jean de Paris et l'ecclesiologie di xiii' siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1942), Appendix; also by F. Bleienstein as *Über königliche und päpstliche Gewalt ... Textkritische Edition mit deutscher Übersetzung* (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1969). This last work has been translated into English twice (both times with the same title, *On Royal and Papal Power*): by J.A. Watt (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1971) and A.P. Monahan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). For some brief account of the use of Augustinian ideas in royalist argumentation see Figgis, *The Political Aspects of Saint Augustine's 'City of God,'* ch. 5.

41. The description given here is, of course, very much an outline. For detailed accounts of Donatism see W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); B.H. Warmington, *The North African Provinces from Diocletian to the Vandal Conquest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954); G.G. Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (London:

SPCK, 1950). See also M.A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

42. We notice that, writing as governor of Bithynia in ca 112 to the emperor Trajan, the younger Pliny describes conventicles of Christians as *collegia illicita*, 'unlawful associations,' but remarks that, contrary to what is often supposed, they do not seem to mean any harm (*Epistulae* 10:96, translated in H. Bettenson (ed.), *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); though one should point out, *pace* Bettenson, that *collegia illicita* does not mean 'secret societies').
43. See *Episulae* 35:4, written in 396 to a Donatist bishop called Eusebius. '[W]hen I was passing through the Spanian district, a presbyter of [Proculianus, Donatist bishop of Hippo,] standing in the middle of a field belonging to a virtuous Catholic woman, shouted out after me in a most insulting fashion, calling me a traitor [*traditor*] and a persecutor.'
44. Donatus is a fairly common name, and there seem to have been at least two Donatist bishops called Donatus. This fact has from time to time caused confusion. See Augustine, *Retractationes* 1:21:3. It is not clear that the Donatus Magnus who succeeded Majorinus as Donatist bishop of Carthage and Donatus of Casae Nigrae are the same person.
45. Professor Frend is a particular and convincing exponent of this view.
46. 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,' Tertullian says (*Apologeticus* 50). He tells the story of how in 185 a group of Christians approached the governor of Asia and begged him to put them to death (*Ad Scapulam* 5). On the culture of martyrdom in the early Church R.L. Fox says: 'At their trials, martyrs had passed their oral examination: then they waited in prison, assured by their sentence of first-class honours in paradise' (*Pagans and Christians* (San Francisco: Viking, 1986), p. 448). See also S. Benko, 'Pagan Criticism of Christianity during the First Two centuries AD,' in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 23.2 (1980); *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984); G.W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); W.H.C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study in Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965); P. Keresztes, 'The Imperial Roman Government and the Christian Church. I. From Nero to the Severi. II. From Gallienus to the Great Persecution,' *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 23.2 (1980) pp. 247; 375; R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 1966).

47. Cf. Augustine, *Epistulae.* 88:6–8.
48. The pejorative word *circumcelliones* is not really translatable, but it conveys something of the idea of ruffians lurking around poverty-stricken hut settlements: *circum cellas euntes.* C.N. Cochrane's translation, 'vagabonds', is probably as close as one can come (*Christianity and Classical Culture*, p. 206). Professor Frend suggests (*The Donatist Church*, p. 173) that the name comes from the fact that the *circumcelliones* lived 'around the shrines' – *circum cellas* – upon which they depended for food; cf. Warmington, *The North African Provinces*, pp. 87–88. *Agonistici*, 'strivers,' is not a pejorative term.
49. They both denied the accusation. Caecilianus was exonerated in October 313 by a synod of bishops appointed by Constantine, and Felix by an enquiry conducted in 314 by Annulinus, Proconsul of Africa. These findings were confirmed by the Council of Arles in August 314. See Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, p. 7.
50. A view which has been erroneous in the Western Church since the Council of Arles of 314 (can. 8); but this 'Roman' view was not unanimously accepted in the East: cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 7; Athanasius, *Oratio contra Arianos* 2:42:43.
51. This work is not extant; we know of it from Augustine's description at *Retractationes.* 2:5.
52. *Epistulae* 51:3; 93:5; *Contra litteras Petiliani* 2:58:132. At *Epistulae* 93:5, Augustine says: 'Your own predecessors sought to have Caecilianus and his companions punished by the kings of the earth when you charged them with false crimes. Let the lions now be turned against the slanderers to break their bones in pieces.' One should perhaps point out that the reference to lions is not literal. Augustine is referring to Daniel 6:24: 'And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions ... and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces.'
53. See especially *Epistulae* 23, 34, 35, 44, 87, 88, 89, 93 and 185.
54. *Epistulae* 93:5.
55. The Maximinus mentioned at *De civitate Dei* 22:8 is the same person.
56. *Epistulae* 23:7.
57. *Epistulae* 89:2.
58. The Rogatists were one of the several factions into which the Donatist church split shortly after its foundation.

59. Whom Augustine nonetheless addresses as 'my dearly beloved brother;' cf. his words to Maximinus at *Epistulae* 23:8: 'May the Lord God deign to breathe peace into your mind, my most beloved lord and brother.' Augustine is always prepared to regard the Donatist clergy, as distinct from the criminal *circumcelliones*, as honourable but misguided brethren in Christ.
60. *Epistulae* 93 and 185. See also *Contra litteras Petilani* 2:83:184; *In Ioannis epistulam* 10:7; *De civitate Dei* 18:50.
61. *Epistulae* 93:5.
62. The obvious question here – that if any religious belief is socially constructed, why should not the same be true of all religious belief? – is not one that Augustine addresses.
63. *Epistulae* 93:5.
64. Ibid.
65. *Epistulae* 93:2.
66. Luke 14:23.
67. *Epistulae* 185:19–36.
68. See *Epistulae* 100:1–2; and cf. *Contra litteras Petiliani* 2:83:184: 'The Catholic Church herself ... was ferociously attacked by bands of armed men under Optatus [of Thamugadi]. It was this that first made it necessary for us to go before the vicar Seranus and ask that the law imposing a fine of ten pounds in gold should be enforced against you; though none of you has paid it yet! And you call us cruel! Where could you find a more lenient response to the grave crimes that you have committed than that they should be punished by the imposition of a monetary fine?'
69. *The Donatist Church*, p. 234, italics mine. And see n. 52, above.
70. *Epistulae* 185:19.
71. Psalm 2:10–11.
72. *Epistulae* 185:19.

Summary

Before we attempt to sum up Augustine's political thought, we must reiterate that, insofar as it suggests organization and system, the expression 'political thought' is one that we can use only with a reservation. We have several times emphasized that Augustine's social and political 'doctrines' arise always in association with some other concern. His medieval admirers found in his writings a good deal of material for their cause. In some respects they misrepresented him; in others – arguably – they brought out implications that he himself did not fully explore. What they constructed out of his ideas has not unreasonably been called an Augustinian political theory, or 'political Augustinianism.' But Augustine's own political reflections are not ordered into a deliberate body of exposition or analysis. We have presented as fully as possible what he has to say about the State, the institutions of private property and slavery, the phenomenon of war, and the relation of temporal to spiritual power. But all these things are present in his writings incidentally or contingently. They arise out of his critique of the culture of pagan Rome; out of his theological investigations of grace and the nature of the Church; out of sermons and pastoral writings; and out of the treatises and correspondence produced during his controversial encounters with Pelagianism and Donatism. Anyone who sets out to present Augustine's political ideas in the form of a logically ordered account has therefore to own up to having 'reconstructed' something that was never constructed in the first place. Given the diversity of his purposes and audiences, it is not surprising that there should be ambiguities in Augustine's thought; though some of those ambiguities – notably in what he has to say about war – are inherent in his subject matter.

What is surprising is that his 'political thought' exhibits the high degree of coherence that it does: that its blemishes and inconsistencies are so few and, for the most part, so peripheral.

In what sense can we say that Augustine's remarks present us with a Christian transformation of political philosophy? On the one hand, he is heir to a long and distinguished tradition of ancient thought. He is intolerant of philosophy insofar as its exponents have misconceived or exaggerated what philosophy can achieve; but he is himself a philosopher nonetheless. Cicero's *Hortensius* won him over to philosophy as a youth, and he uses the language and habits of thought with which an education in classical literature and philosophy equipped him. He is a Christian Neoplatonist *par excellence*. He has little Greek and knows Plato and the Neoplatonist philosophers only in translation; but he understands them thoroughly, and he does not think their writings entirely destitute of truth. The Platonist distinction between this world and the higher world beyond appeals to Augustine both as a Christian and as an individual in whose own mind and motives there are evident divisions. He understands and is in many ways sympathetic to Stoicism as transmitted to him through the earlier Fathers and pagan Roman sources. The Earthly City and the City of God are recognizably Stoic *cosmopoleis*. The idea of mankind as a family united by a bond of kinship and subject to a rational and universal law owes much, even though clearly not everything, to Stoic ethics. His account of the difference between true justice and peace and earthly justice and peace is that of someone who is thinking instinctively in Platonist terms. His solution to the 'problem' of evil – his description of evil as a privation of good – is uncomplicated Neoplatonism.

On the other hand, the contrast between Augustine's and the 'classical' estimate of the value and ends of political life could hardly be sharper. The notion that human beings can find what Aristotle had called *eudaimonia* – ethical fulfilment and rational happiness – through membership of a political community has completely disappeared. In drawing upon the language and ideas of the pagan

philosophical heritage, and in scrutinizing those ideas in the light of the Christian revelation, Augustine has effectively refashioned them into a Christian philosophy of politics. He does not himself develop this philosophy as a system, nor does he bring out everything that seems to be entailed in it. But he created much of the language in which later political controversialists were to do these things, and he largely established the categories of thought upon which they were to rely.

It is not inapposite to use the expression 'political theology' in relation to Augustine. At the heart of his evaluation of political life lie two transformational themes that were in the nature of the case absent from classical conceptions. These themes are the impairment of the relationship between mankind and God by sin, and the conviction that this impairment has consequences for every aspect of man's individual and collective existence. It is under the influence of these themes that Augustine so largely abandons the political morality associated with Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, even while retaining so much of their philosophical outlook. It is also under their influence that he dismisses the traditional moral and political claims of Rome. Man's nature has become so disordered by the sin of his first parents that he is born incapable of not living a sinful, wretched, destructive life. The law of nature still holds; human reason can discern it still, and it is codified for us in the Scriptures: but our wills are too weak to act on it. The only thing that can rescue mankind from this moral incapacity is the grace of God, mysteriously and undeservedly bestowed. Human beings cannot achieve any moral good whatsoever without this grace: not by political participation, not through education, not through military accomplishment. All achievement, all courage, all fortitude, everything than men value: patriotism, wealth, glory, power – these things are only expressions of egoism and self-love without the grace of God to transfigure them.

Man's ethical good is therefore related not to any earthly citizenship or engagement, but to his membership of the company of the

Elect: the City of God. This membership is conferred on him from a source lying outside the material world. It comes from another, supersensible world, in which the only true and perfect values are to be found. The political and economic arrangements that arise in the present world do so not by a process of natural growth, not because they comprise or contribute to a milieu that is natural to man, but because they are the visible outcomes of sin. They are related to sin in three distinguishable but closely connected ways. They institutionalize or exemplify it; they are permitted to exist by God in order to provide an antidote of sorts to its material effects; and they operate as one of the ways in which the sinful are punished and the righteous tested.

The institutions through which human life is organized and made tolerable are thus products and features of our fallen condition. Their operation, even at the best of times, is harsh, negative and coercive. The Christian's duty is to live in the presence of them with fidelity and hope. Even the government of unbelievers can produce the kind of justice that consists in order and relative peace. Rulers should 'serve the Lord with fear,' but even rulers who do not are to be obeyed in everything that is not sin. This principle holds even in the case of despotic rulers: the tyrant's instruments of oppression chastise and purify us. Material property may be held and used, but not sought or valued for itself. Slavery is unobjectionable, but it is an external condition only: it does not cancel out the natural equality that only the righteous understand. War is inevitable and terrible; it sunders members of the human family from one another: but it is also an instrument of peace and discipline. We must wage only just wars and strive through them to secure as much peace as is possible, acknowledging at the same time that such peace is not really peace at all.

For Augustine, a fact that colours all aspects of earthly life is that, until this world ends, the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas Dei* are mingled indistinguishably in every earthly State. They are mingled indistinguishably also in the earthly Church. Outward membership of

the institutional Church is no guarantee of salvation; nor can the blessing of the Church transform the State into a moral, as distinct from a faulty and instrumental, order. Not even the visible Church is a moral community. Individual members of the Church may be among the Elect, but neither Church nor State can be a true, a Ciceronian, commonwealth. Many who minister in the Church do so in the hope of gain and self-advancement, and it is not possible to tell by outward appearance who is truly a Christian and who is not. The righteous individual on earth is a member of the pilgrim City of God. His life is a perilous and weary journey through a world of trial, ambiguity and false values: a world in which he is ultimately a stranger, and in which no redemption lies.

We have noticed that, at the level of specifics, Augustine is a conservative thinker, by temperament and persuasion. He does not wish to associate himself with any recommendation that might compromise the fragile order sustained by this world's expedients. But behind his conservatism with regard to specifics – and, indeed, informing it – lies a critique of the utmost radicalism. Augustine's response to the political assumptions and claims of classical antiquity transcends what one might call 'ordinary' radicalism. As Professor Markus puts it (*Saeculum*, p. 103): 'The complexity and poise of his final estimate of politics stems from his conviction that the quest for perfection and happiness through politics is doomed. The archetypal society, where alone true human fulfilment can be found, is the society of the angels and saints in heaven: not a *polis*.' Augustine's analysis therefore does not embrace the possibility of political reform, nor does he adopt the classical practice of discussing and comparing constitutions. His project is not that of drawing attention to weaknesses and inadequacies in our political arrangements with a view to recommending their abolition or improvement. To his mind, it is inconceivable that human ingenuity might bring into being an ideal or perfect State, or even a State that is in any final and positive sense good.

Augustine's politics, is, then, in what may be an overworked phrase, a politics of imperfection. Perhaps it is better to call it an eschatological politics. He does not so much abandon the traditional values of peace and justice as postpone the hope of their realization to the next world. The best that mortals can hope for in this world is a set of arrangements that is less bad than it might be. Any government is better than nothing, because without restraint there could be only chaos. But all government is defective because its mechanisms are the devices by which a fallen world is regulated. Even pagan governments can accomplish justice and peace of a kind. States presided over by Christian rulers can accomplish these things better than any other States, at least partly by devoting their resources to the service of spiritual ends. But the virtues of the Christian State are not, strictly speaking, political virtues. They arise from the use that righteous individuals make of faulty instruments; but the instruments remain faulty, and not even Christian government can rise above imperfection. The best earthly versions of justice and peace are not true justice and peace, and even tyrannical rule, from which justice is absent by definition, has its part to play in God's plan. If true justice could exist on earth, there would be no need for the State. It is precisely the *impossibility* of true justice on earth that makes the State necessary. True justice and peace are ideas: ideas in the technical, Platonist sense. Members of the *civitas Dei peregrina*, the pilgrim City of God, will not enjoy them until they have arrived at their destination. They exist only in heaven; they will be apprehended in their completeness only when this world's history is at an end.

This page intentionally left blank

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(a) Primary Sources

The standard English translations of Augustine's works are still those printed in *The Works of Aurelius Augustinus*, edited by Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871-1876) and *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff (New York, 1887–1902; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979). The translations in these collections are of variable quality, and are gradually being superseded by more recent efforts. A series of new English translations by various hands was begun under the editorship of J.E. Rotelle in 1990 and is being published as *The Complete Works of St. Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century* (New York: New City Press). Mention may be made also of *Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans*, edited and translated by R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and E.M. Atkins and R.J. Dodaro, *Augustine: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). A selection of Augustine's 'political' passages is given, with commentary, in R.W. Dyson, *The Pilgrim City: Social and Political Ideas in the Writings of St Augustine of Hippo* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2001). For a selection without commentary see H. Paolucci and D. Bigongiari (eds), *The Political Writings of St Augustine* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962).

Many, if not most, translators of Augustine have the undesirable habit of 'improving' on the original, either for the sake of clarity or in the interests of their own religious preferences. In particular, the translation of *De civitate Dei* by H. Bettenson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican, 1972) is so free as to be almost a paraphrase. I have in this volume either made my own translations or amended the translations of others where they seemed to need amending. The original texts should be consulted where possible in the critical editions published in the *Corpus Christianorum* or the *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* series. Works not appearing in either of these series can be found in the Benedictine editions of 1679–1700, as reprinted in vols 32–47 of Migne's *Patrologia latina*. The earliest biography of Augustine was written, probably within two or three years of his death, by St Possidius, bishop of Calama. This work has been edited, with introduction, notes and an English translation, by H.T. Weiskotten, as *Sancti Augustini Vita Scripta a Possidio Episcopo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1919).

There is another translation by F.R. Hoare in his *The Western Fathers* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1954). This volume also includes a translation of Paulinus's *Vita sancti Ambrosii.*

(b) Selected Secondary Sources

Arnold, E.V. *Roman Stoicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

Arquillière, F.-X. *L'Augustinisme politique* (Paris: Vrin, 1939).

Babcock, W.S. (ed.), *The Ethics of St. Augustine* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).

Bathory, P.D. *Political Theory as Public Confession: The Social and Political Thought of St Augustine of Hippo* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1981).

Baynes, N.H. *The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's 'De civitate Dei'* (London: Historical Association, 1936).

Bonner, G. *St Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1986).

—— 'Pelagianism and Augustine,' *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992).

Bourke, V.J. *Augustine's Love of Wisdom: An Introspective Philosophy*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1992).

Brown, P. *Augustine of Hippo: a Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967).

—— 'Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 19 (1968).

—— *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971).

Bryn, T.W. *The Psychology of Conversion with Special Reference to Saint Augustine* (London: Allenson, 1935).

Burleigh, J.H.S. *The City of God: A Study of St Augustine's Philosophy* (London: Nisbet, 1949).

Burns, J.P. *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1980).

Burton, M.L. *The Problem of Evil: A Criticism of the Augustinian Point of View* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909).

Carlyle, R.W. and A.J. *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West* (6 vols, Edinburgh: Blackwood, repr. 1962).

Cochrane, C.N. *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943).

Combès, G. *La doctrine politique de saint Augustin* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1927).

Connolly, W.E. *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality* (London: Sage, 1993).

Darcy, M.C. et al. (eds), *A Monument to St Augustine*, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930).

Deane, H.A. *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

Dodds, E.R. *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

Donnelly, D.D. *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

Doran, R. *Birth of a World View: Early Christianity in Its Jewish and Pagan Context* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

Dyson, R.W. 'St Augustine's Remarks on Time,' *Downside Review* 100 (1982).

—— *Normative Theories of Society and Government in Five Medieval Thinkers* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Mellen, 2003).

—— *Natural Law and Political Realism in the History of Political Thought*, vol. 1 (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

Earl, D. *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967).

Elshtain, J.B. *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

Evans, G.R. *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Evans, R.F. *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (London: A. & C. Black, 1968).

Ferguson, J. *Pelagius: A Historical and Theological Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

Figgis, J.N. *The Political Aspects of Saint Augustine's 'City of God'* (London: Longmans, 1921).

Fortin, E.L. 'Augustine's City of God and the Modern Historical Consciousness,' *Review of Politics* 41 (1979).

Fredriksen, P. 'Paul And Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 37 (1986).

Frend, W.H.C. *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study in Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965).

—— *The Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, repr. 1985).

Gilson, E. *The Christian Philosophy of St Augustine of Hippo* (London: Gollancz, 1960).

Grant, R.M. *Augustus to Constantine: the Thrust of the Christian Movement into the Roman World* (London: Collins, 1972).

Greenslade, S.L. *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius* (London: SCM Press, 1954).

Jolivet, R. *Le problème du mal d'après saint Augustin* (2nd ed., Paris: Archives de Philosophie, 1936).

Kelly, J.F. *The World of the Early Christians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997).

Keyes, G.L. *Christian Faith and the Interpretation of History: A Study of St. Augustine's Philosophy of History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

King, N.Q. *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1961).

Kirwan, C. *Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1989).

La Porte, J. and Weaver, F.E. 'Augustine and Woman: Relationships and Teachings,' *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981).

Lavere, G.J. 'The Political Realism of Saint Augustine,' *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980).

—— 'The Influence of Saint Augustine on Early Medieval Political Theory,' *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981).

Lee, K.L.E. *Augustine, Manichaeism, and the Good* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

Lenihan, D. 'The Just War Theory in the Works of Saint Augustine,' *Augustinian Studies* 19 (1988).

Lloyd, A.C. *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

Markus, R.A. *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

—— *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Martin, R. 'The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33 (1972).

Momigliano, A. (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

Mommsen, T.E. 'St Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of the City of God,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951).

O'Connell, R.J. *Images of Conversion in Saint Augustine's Confessions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995).

O'Meara, J. 'Neo-Platonism in the Conversion of St Augustine,' *Dominican Studies* 3 (1950).

—— *The Young Augustine: The Growth of St Augustine's Mind up to his Conversion* (London: Longmans, 1954).

—— 'Augustine and Neoplatonism,' *Recherches augustiniennes* 1 (1958).

—— *Charter of Christendom: The Significance of The 'City of God'* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).

Oort, J. van, Wurst, G. and Wermelinger, O. (eds), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

Plinval, G. de *Pélage: ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme* (Lausanne: Librairie Payot, 1943).

Portalié, E., SJ, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine* (trans. R.J. Bastian, SJ; London: Burns & Oates, 1960).

Power, K. *Veiled Desire: Augustine's Writings on Women* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995).

Rees, B.R. *Pelagius: Life and Letters* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1998).

Rist, J.M. *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

—— *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Scott, T.K. *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).

Soble, A.G. 'Correcting some Misunderstandings about St. Augustine's Sex Life,' *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11:4 (2002).

Stead, C. *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Suter, R. 'Augustine on Time with some Criticisms from Wittgenstein,' *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 16 (1962).

TeSelle, E. *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970).

—— 'Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, Pelagius: Explorations in the Pre-History of the Pelagian Controversy,' *Augustinian Studies* 3 (1972).

—— *Living in Two Cities: Augustinian Trajectories in Political Thought* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1998).

Teske, R. 'Saint Augustine as a Philosopher: the Birth of Christian Metaphysics,' *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992).

Tilley, M.A. *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

Wallis, R.T. *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1995).

Warmington, B.H. *The North African Provinces from Diocletian to the Vandal Conquest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954).

Weaver, R.H. *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, Patristic Monograph Series 15 (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1996).

Willis, G.G. *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (London: SPCK, 1950).

Index